Hacettepe University Graduate School of Social Sciences
Department of American Culture and Literature

FORWARD TO THE PAST: NARRATIVES OF VIOLENCE AND TRAUMA IN JONATHAN SAFRAN FOER'S NOVELS

Mariya DOĞAN

M.A. Thesis

Ankara, 2018

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Mariya Doğan tarafından hazırlanan "Geçmişe Yolculuk: Jonathan Safran Foer'in Romanlarda Şiddet ve Trauma Anlatıları" başlıklı bu çalışma, 12 Haziran 2018 tarihinde yapılan savunma sınavı sonucunda başarılı bulunarak jürimiz tarafından yüksek lisans tezi olarak kabul edilmiştir.

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Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Ceylan ÖZCAN (Danışman)

Doç. Dr. S. Bilge MUTLUAY ÇETİNTAŞ

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Z. Ayça GERMEN

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✓ **Serbest Seçenek/Yazarın Seçimi**

12 /06/2018

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ETİK BEYAN

Bu çalışmadaki bütün bilgi ve belgeleri akademik kurallar çerçevesinde elde ettiğimi, görsel, işitsel ve yazılı tüm bilgi ve sonuçları bilimsel ahlak kurallarına uygun olarak sunduğumu, kullandığım verilerde herhangi bir tahrifat yapmadığımı, yararlandığım kaynaklara bilimsel normlara uygun olarak atıfta bulunduğumu, tezimin kaynak gösterilen durumlar dışında özgün olduğunu, **Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Ceylan ÖZCAN** danışmanlığında tarafımdan üretildiğini ve Hacettepe Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Tez Yazım Yönergesine göre yazıldığını beyan ederim.

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ÖZET

DOĞAN, Mariya. *Geçmişe Yolculuk: Jonathan Safran Foer'in Romanlarda Şiddet ve Travma Anlatıları.* Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Ankara, 2018

Bu çalışma, Jonathan Safran Foer'ın üç romanında şiddet içeren olayları ve bu olayların bireylerin yaşamına etkisini incelemektedir. Foer, 20. ve 21. yüzyıllarda dünyada ve Amerikan toplumunda gerçekleşen tarihsel travmaları konu alarak bir kolaj oluşturmaktadır. İlk romanı *Everything is Illuminated* (2002), Yahudi soykırımı (Holokost) geçmişiyle yüzleşmenin ve kişiselleştirmenin zorluklarını irdeler; ikinci romanı *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005) ise 11 Eylül 2001 terör saldırılarının ardından yaşanan kişisel travmanın ve kaybedilen yakınlar için duyulan acının dile getirilmesindeki güçlüğü gösterir; *Here I Am* (2016) başlıklı son romanı da bir ailedeki evlilik krizini Orta Doğu'da süre gelen askeri çatışmalar ekseninde ele alır. Bu eserlerde şiddetin temsili Nazilerin fiziksel işkencelerinin detaylı tasvirinden Hiroşima'ya yapılan nükleer saldırının anlatımına ve sanal savaşın resmedilmesine uzanan bir çeşitlilik gösterir.

Bu tez, bilinen ve belgelenmiş savaş, katliam, terör saldırısı gibi şiddet ve vahşet içeren olaylar karşısında bireylerin verdikleri tepkileri örneklendirmek ve incelemek amacıyla, Foer'ın romanlarında şiddeti zamana ve mekana yayılan bir bakış açısıyla sunduğunu öne sürmektedir. Söz konusu üç eserde şiddet içeren olayların resmi ve tarihsel gerçekliği bireyin yaşadığı travmanın kişisel ve öznel anlatımına dönüştürülmektedir. Foer'ın karakterleri hem yaşadıkları kişisel trajedilerle başa çıkmaya hem de travmanın kuşaklar arası aktarımının üstesinden gelmeye çalışırlar. Aynı zamanda, yazar şiddet içeren olaylar hakkındaki bilgi ve gerçeklerin gelecek kuşaklara aktarma gerekliliğini de vurgulamaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler

Jonathan Safran Foer, Amerikan Yahudi romanı, romanda şiddet, romanda Holokost, romanda 11 Eylül, travmanın anlatımı, hafıza

ABSTRACT

DOĞAN, Mariya. *Forward to the Past: Narratives of Violence and Trauma in Jonathan Safran Foer's Novels*. M.A. Thesis, Ankara, 2018.

Each of Jonathan Safran Foer's three novels, discussed in this thesis, depicts the aftermath of a massive violent event and its effect on the life of an individual. In many respects, Foer creates a collage of historical traumas that the global community was exposed to throughout the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries. His debut novel *Everything is Illuminated* (2002) addresses the difficulties of the personalization of the Holocaust legacy; the second novel, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005), which deals with the 9/11 terrorist attacks, shows the problems associated with narrating personal trauma and expressing the grief for the loss of loved ones; the latest novel *Here I Am* (2016) counterpoises a family's marital crisis with an ongoing international military conflict in the Middle East. In these novels the representation of violence ranges from the graphic portrayals of physical mutilations as in episodes of Nazi torturing or descriptions of the nuclear attack on Hiroshima, to depictions of an on-line battle.

This thesis suggests that in his novels Foer presents an extended temporal and spatial perspective on violence in order to illustrate an individual's response to well-known and well-documented cases of mass-violence. The three novels transform impersonal factual information about historical brutality into intimate and subjective testimonies and narratives about personal traumas. Foer's characters try to cope with their personal tragedies and overcome the intergenerational continuum of trauma. At the same time, the author stresses the need to pass on knowledge and the truth about incidents of brutality to future generations.

Keywords

Jonathan Safran Foer, Jewish American fiction, violence in fiction, Holocaust fiction, 9/11 fiction, narrative of trauma, postmemory.

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INTRODUCTION

> At the forefront of our minds, the obvious signals of violence are acts of crime and terror, civil unrest, international conflict. But we should learn to step back, to disentangle ourselves from the fascinating lure of this directly visible "subjective" violence, violence performed by a clearly identifiable agent. We need to perceive the contours of the background which generates such outbursts. A step back enables us to identify a violence that sustains our very efforts to fight violence and to promote tolerance.
>
> (Zizek, *Violence* 1)

In fictional texts, the subject of violence is essentially serious, weighted down by traumatic realities and painful truths. Representations of brutality, which emphasize the nature of violent experiences and expose the mechanisms of coping with trauma, cannot be ignored but should be understood and confronted. The narrative of violence allows writers to express the core of the literary conflict: whether it is a story of a romantic revenge or a saga about racial or class uprising, episodes of brutality possess energy and animation, and often have a central role within the plot. Violence creates "a believable reality which gives the heart and the senses that kind of concrete bite which all true sensations require" (Artaud 85). It allows "the mask to fall, reveals the lie, the slackness, baseness, and hypocrisy of the world" (Fraser 48).

Numerous studies on the representation of violence in literature draw attention to growing naturalism in fictional depictions of brutal actions. "American fiction is not for the faint-hearted" (3) notes Michael Kowalewski in his study of literary violence, while John Fraser in his book *Violence in the Arts* reports "the general raising of the shock threshold" (6).

However, when challenged with accusations of excessive depictions of aggression, writers defend their right to expose bitter truths: "complaining about an author's being obsessed with violence is like saying the carpenter is obsessed with his hammer;

violence is simply one of the carpenter's tools" replies William Faulkner to allegations of a "substantial 'body-count'" in his works (qtd. in Kowalevski 176). George R. R. Martin, whose epic fantasy novels are often criticized for an overreliance on violence, explains that "to omit [rape and sexual violence] from the narrative centered on war and power would have been fundamentally false and dishonest, and would have undermined one of the themes in the books: that the true horrors of human history derive not from Orcs and Dark Lords, but from ourselves. We are the monsters" (*Guardian*, 6 May 2014). Keri Hulme, who won the 1985 Man Booker Prize for her novel *The Bone People*, made a similar comment: "There's a lot of violence in the book, of course. That's because we … are violent people."

In other words, writers consider literary depictions of violence to be both a thematic center and an essential structural element of a fictional text; they argue that brutality should be "conceptualized as kind of critical rosetta stone, one that provides thematic or ideological inscriptions, encryptings, or encodings of . . . history, politics, class and gender concerns, and cultural conditions of production . . . that run parallel to or are embedded within violent scenes" (Kowalewski 19).

This attitude is supported by literary critics who, despite complaining about the increasing "banality of evil" (Hannah Arendt) and "compassion exhaustion" (Clifford Orwin)[1], agree that depictions of violence have a cathartic role in a text. For example, Richard Slotkin in *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of American Frontier* interprets violence as the true engine behind the American myth of regeneration, a force that drives the nation's expansion. In *The Novel of Violence in America: 1920-1950,* William Frohock also equates violence with the idea of American strength and resilience. Carolyn Karcher argues that it is an essential element and a symbol of any society, while Louise Y. Gossett in *Violence in Recent Southern Fiction* links the discourse of brutality with the motif of identity search.

[1] Clifford Orwin reinterprets Arendt's famous quote about "the banality of evil" to criticize effects of overexposure to violence in contemporary media: " images of particular victims, . . . pegs on which to hang our imagination, we can always turn them off or tune them out, i.e., watch without seeing and listen without hearing. . . . Horrors that [they] display remain in the background also" ("Compassion and the Globalization of the Spectacle of Suffering," *Books in Canada*, 1996)

In this sense, minority literatures that aim to voice out a protest against dominant cultural and social categories provide rich material for the study of the discourse of violence. Writers of ethnic descent invoke, whether directly or through allusions, questions of historical and cultural strain, collective trauma, problems of assimilation or maintaining identity. Talking about these subjects is impossible without references to disturbing historical contexts, thus graphic episodes of violence often comprise a substantial part of ethnic narratives. With fictional accounts of historical violence authors ask the reader to reconsider their perception of the mainstream. John Fraser explains:

> While one can and does respond more or less numbly to a good many situations and characters in all kinds of fiction, a numbness of response is both more obvious and more disturbing where real historical trauma is involved. It is in violent encounters that one is required most obviously to reaffirm or reassess one's own values and to acknowledge the necessity of having as strong and clearly articulated a value system, as sharply defined a self, as much alertness to others, and as firm a will as possible. (157)

Among other ethnic literatures, Jewish American fiction provides rich and interesting material for the study of literary depictions of violence. Stephan Wade in *Jewish American Literature since 1945* explains that writers of Jewish heritage create texts where protagonists, often depicted as isolated and different, have been "constructed as either a victim—rootless and ostracized—or as a usurer, a winner in the capitalist game learnt of his masters" (6). In either case, such characters imply conflicts that are made up by "an awareness of fundamental identity being erased" (8). The correlation between the need to pass on the historical knowledge to future generations and the desire to break loose from the continuum of trauma, give the concept of violence a unique role in the works of contemporary Jewish American writers.

This emphasis on the legacy of historical violence in works by Jewish American novelists explains why the fictional experiences of their characters are inevitably judged through the prism of actual historical events, such as Jewish pogroms, the atrocities of the Holocaust or the struggles and misery of the immigration experience. Violence is analyzed as a diachronic concept that originates in the labyrinth of historical trauma and is often transferred into the present in the form of a legend, a myth. This extended

temporal and spatial perspective on violence defines contemporary Jewish American fiction, and is an essential part of Jonathan Safran Foer's writing.

The three novels, discussed in this thesis, although concerned with principally different subjects, essentially analyze the aftermath of massive violent events and their effect on an individual's life. Foer's critically acclaimed first novel, *Everything is Illuminated* (2002), discusses the journey of an American Jew in search of his ethnic identity, family history and personal connection with the Holocaust. The second novel, *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* (2005), focuses on a young boy's journey to come to terms with the death of his father in the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The author's latest novel *Here I Am*, published in 2016, continues many of these topics, including the search for ethnic identity through the Holocaust legacy and the personal response to mass violence.

The three novels are defined by reflections on brutality which dominate modern society, from patriarchal pressure within the family to large-scale military conflicts. Violence, therefore, becomes not only the subject and one of the themes of Foer's fictional texts, but also their background and the consequence of the events within the plot. Depictions of violence range from the naturalistic portrayal of physical mutilations as in episodes of Nazi torturing in *Everything is Illuminated* or in descriptions of the nuclear attack on Hiroshima in *Extremely Loud,* to a spectacle of an on-line battle in *Here I Am*. Foer often compares and connects incidents of brutality to address the amorality of inhumane acts and to show the universality of their influence on an individual. The reader is asked to consider every episode through the perspective of personal trauma and, therefore, needs to judge each event as merely another example of the universal nonstop sequence of cruelty. Foer denies the idea that "the axiom of the uniqueness" (Novick 14) can be constructed against any violent episode, whether it affected several nations or only one person. The events depicted in the novels are specifically chosen to show various cases of brutality, therefore in the novels' fictional narrative the Holocaust is followed by the Dresden bombing, and the destruction of Hiroshima is compared to the terrorist attack on New York. In line with Peter Novick's argument in *The Holocaust in American Life*, Foer is granting every historical atrocity a place in the global picture of violence and shows mistake and danger of asserting the primacy of a single atrocity over others. The

writer thus points to the impossibility of "trivializing crimes . . . into 'truly holocaustal or merely genocidal'; 'truly genocidal or merely atrocious'" (Novick 14).

The novelist also addresses the problems of representing violence in a fictional text and the peculiarities of trauma narratives in literature. The texts of the three novels become an indication of the distortions which memories of violence undergo over time. Naomi Mandel suggests that the fidelity of Foer's fiction to historical violence proclaims itself "if not in the facts, then in the manifestations of their psychic impact" (242). Highly experimental in form, the novels include shifts between time and space continuum, their plotlines equally draw on true accounts of historic atrocities and on myths, disturbing verbal testimonies of violence are included alongside displays of its aftermath.

That is why, in the scope of this study, the term "violence" is used in the sense of a narrative, where it serves not as a mere depiction, but "a *re-presentation* of reality," shaped by the "subjectivity of the narrator" (Reid 5). According to the structuralist model, each narrative can be divided "into story (what is told) and discourse (how it is told)" (Gholami 52). This is to say, that within the narrative timeline, a logic of connection and hierarchy of events does not always follow the sequence of real-life occurrences: some actions are given priority whereas others are omitted or shown only indirectly through their consequences. According to *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, the novel is understood "to be a picture of life which binds readers together by an extension of human sympathy and emotional appeal, thereby enabling them to experience the emotions of others." Through the narratives of violence "the text itself can mimic symptoms such as amnesia through ellipses or flashbacks through anachronies and repetitions. When a reader makes the connection between such textual features and trauma she is engaged in literary-historical witnessing to the trauma of the text" (207).

In other words, narrating violence becomes the principal way for the author to organize and express his own understanding of life, his opinion about the continuity of history and the norms of ethics in contemporary society. Testimonial accounts of atrocities in the novels interchange with fictional or imagined manifestations of brutality. Violence, consequently, becomes a narrative of itself, where the logic of actual historical continuum is taken over by its "presentation" and "representation." In his portrayal of

universal brutality, Foer combines realistic scenes that aim to provoke the reader's empathy with fantastic episodes where violence has an allegorical function. The portrayals of characters' daily outbursts, their fantasies of power and control, are paralleled by references to true events that shape the reader's understanding of brutality. Even though humorous depictions of clashes between the characters provide comic relief and entertainment, and detailed accounts of real historical disasters use graphic details to stir the reader's compassion towards fictional victims, they are all incorporated in a wide panorama of the narrative of violence.

At the same time, in all three novels the writer creates an imaginary world, a realm of fantasy, where correlations between actual historical atrocities and their allegorical representations are destroyed. These scenes are characterized by the reader's awareness of the improbable nature of the depicted events and by grotesqueness of the narrative of violence. These episodes, which are deeply rooted in real historical context but, at the same time, acknowledge and pay tribute to the unreliability of the narrative, are of particular importance in Foer's fiction.

As a representative of so-called "the third generation" of Holocaust survivors, or, as they are also called, "the Post-Roth generation" (Zakrewski) or "the New Yiddishists" (Sax), Foer is not only haunted by the histories that took place before he was born, but also attempts to define his identity through the past he has never experienced. It should be noted here that, although the attention of contemporary Jewish American authors expands over centuries of Jewish history and follows such topics as migration, displacement and ethnic conflicts, it is above all involved with the trauma of the Holocaust that is considered to still shape the communal identity of the Jewish people. The destruction of the European Jewish population during World War II meant that the centuries-long tradition associated with Jewish culture of the old world was also destroyed. Now, contemporary Jewish American writers seek access to the culture of old European Jewry and, at the same time, convert it into an elusive myth, "the Jewish past's imaginative reservoir . . . of symbols, stories, motifs, images, tropes, [and] commentaries" (Mintz 245). The inability to seamlessly blend the reality of contemporary America with the enticing past of pre-Holocaust Europe, gives rise to the distinctive writing strategies of the third generation.

Some critics suggest that because this group of writers is sheltered from any type of conflicts by their middle-class American life, they search for emotional upheaval in the events that took place before their time. William Deresiewicz explains this position in the article "The Imaginary Jew" (*The Nation*, May 10, 2007):

> American Jewish experience is not what it used to be, and neither is American Jewish fiction. . . . American Judaism has long been beset by a deep sense of banality and inauthenticity. To the usual self-contempt of the liberal middle class is added the feeling that genuine Jewish life is elsewhere. . . . The most visible of the current generation of self-consciously Jewish novelists appear to be avoiding their own experience because their own experience just seems too boring. What is there to say about it? Better to write about a time or place where there was more at stake.

Whether this is the case or not, a number of socio-cultural and political factors have influenced the recent changes in the notion of Jewish American identity. Peter Novick in *The Holocaust in American Life* suggests that the desire of American Jewry to center their identity on the past trauma is caused by the need to define their ethnicity in the context of American multiethnic society:

> The meaning for American Jewry of its centering of the Holocaust is inseparable from the context in which that centering has taken place. One of the most important elements of that context has been the decline in America of an integrationist ethos (which focused on what Americans have in common and what unites us) and its replacement by a particularist ethos (which stresses what differentiates and divides us). The leaders of American Jewry, who once upon a time had sought to demonstrate that Jews were "just like everybody else, except more so," now had to establish, for both Jews and gentiles, what there was about Jews that made them different. (6-7)

Carolyn Starman Hessel, the director of the Jewish Book Council, agrees, that because of the social tendencies that took place in 1960s and 1970s within the American society, American Jews became "vastly more comfortable in their Jewish skin than previous generations . . . ever were," "never in history have Jews been so integrated and accepted into the mainstream of a Diaspora country" (qtd. in Sax). If writers who composed post-World War II Jewish American fiction "lived at both edges of their hyphens—American-Jewish— and defined themselves or found themselves defined through their incongruities" (*The New Diaspora* 3), the newer fiction arises from the "choruses of 'us, us, us,' the Jews as a collective body embedded in history, culture, and a collective

memory" (*The New Diaspora* 5). Contemporary Jewish writers take their Jewish identity for granted, as much as they take for granted their American identity. "Hyphens have given way to syntheses; they now look more like bridges than barriers" (*The New Diaspora* 5).

At the same time, recent violent events such as "the fall of the World Trade Centre and the continued suicide bombings in Israel, the revival of Anti-Semitic fervor in France, and the sympathetic tilt toward the purveyors of violence and the lack of moral equivalence in the press" (Rosenbaum qtd. in Berger and Cronin 125) appear to reinforce the fears of anti-Semitism in the world and make their contemporaries ask what it means to be a Jew in the twenty-first century. The current political context asks American Jews to revive their notion of ethnic community and to establish continuous sense of history.

Contrary to the writers of Saul Bellow's and Philip Roth's generation who addressed the "sociology of the American Jewish present" (De Moor 6), authors since the 1980s share a renewed interest in the legacy of the Jewish past. Representatives of this new wave incorporate the culture and traditions of their ancestors into their literature, which allowed their works to be called the "literature of retrieval" (Burstein 15) and "the third generation return" (qtd. in Bender & Kagiwaga 360).

This process of cultural transmission through three generations of immigrants was explained as early as 1938 in a study by American historian Marcus Lee Hansen: "What the son wishes to forget, the grandson wishes to remember" (qtd. in Bender and Kagiwaga 360). Hansen claims that while first-generation immigrants usually preserve the traditions of their country of origin, their children, the second generation, often reject them in order to integrate into the American mainstream. The interest towards cultural heritage returns with the grandchildren, who overcome the shame of immigration and rediscover the values of their descent. Hansen argues that:

> When any immigrant group reaches the third generation stage in its development, a spontaneous and almost irresistible impulse arises which forces the thoughts of many people of different professions, different positions in life, and different points of view to interest themselves in that one factor which they have in common: heritage, the heritage of blood. (qtd. in Bender and Kagiwaga 362)

Novick in *The Holocaust in American Life* agrees, that the interest of young American Jews in the "historical foundation" of their identity can be explained by "a circular relationship between collective identity and collective memory" (7). While self-identification through common religion, culture or land becomes problematic in the United States of the late twentieth century, the past becomes "virtually the only denominator of American Jewish identity, . . . a consensual symbol . . . well designed to confront increasing communal anxiety about 'Jewish continuity'" (7).

The young writers' interest in the collective past and, at the same time, their lack of direct access to the actual violent experiences of their grandparents, allowed scholars to separate the fiction of such authors as Jonathan Safran Foer, Nicole Krauss, Michael Chabon, Nathan Englander, Judy Budnitz, Dara Horn, and Joseph Skibell into a distinct category. Philippe Codde in "Keeping Histories at Bay: Absent Presence in Three Recent Jewish American Novels" argues that their fiction, defined by simultaneously concealed and perceptible "absent presences," is fundamentally different from the standards of earlier Jewish American fiction, written by such authors as Art Spiegelman, Sonia Pilcer, S. Hanala Stander, and Helen Epstein. This is how Codde clarifies the status of the contemporary novelists:

> While their existential position could be construed—rather facilely—as merely the next step in the intergenerational transmission of trauma, their ontological status is sufficiently different from that of the second generation to require a different terminology to describe their cognitive and affective situation. (674)

Alan L. Berger explains that the difference between the second and the third generations lies in "the cognitive darkness that was not present among the survivors and their children" (151). As the survivor generation disappears, their grandchildren are left with a "memory shot through with holes"[2]: they neither possess first-hand experience of the tragedy nor have unmediated access to the testimonies of survivors. The editors of the recent short story collection titled *The New Diaspora: The Changing Landscape of American Jewish Fiction* (2015) similarly define the processes within contemporary Jewish American literature: "For post-Holocaust writers of the second and third

[2] This metaphor was introduced and explained in a paper by Henry Raczymow and Alan Astro under the same title, "Memory Shot Through With Holes," for *Yale French Studies* (No.85, Discourses of Jewish Identity in Twentieth-Century France, 1994)

generations, the Holocaust has ineradicably shaped their lives, but as a kind of silhouette, for the memories of such defining events are 'borrowed,' or . . . 'second-hand'" (6).

The increasing temporal and personal gap between generations results in a desire to retrace the past, which gain the sense of what Peter Novick calls "ahistorical," or "anti-historical" experiences (3). Descendants of survivors are often "possessed" by shadows of past traumas, which function as a "mark of the absence of a presence, an always-already absent present" (Codde 691). Henry Raczymow and Alan Astro also note that attempts to claim the past by later generations are accompanied by the sense of a void and absence: "The world that was destroyed was not mine, I never knew it. But I am, so many of us are, the orphans of that world"[3] (103). Generational distance and, at the same time, deep personal connection with traumatic events result in the forming of a "black hole" in the collective memory. Such unfulfilled longing for continuity provides the basis for what Marianne Hirsch defines as postmemory:

> Postmemory is a powerful form of memory precisely because its connection to its object or source is mediated not through recollection but through an imaginative investment and creation. That is not to say that memory itself is unmediated, but that it is more directly connected to the past. Postmemory characterizes the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are displaced by the stories of the previous generation, shaped by traumatic events that can be neither fully understood nor recreated. (662)

It is important to note that Hirsch, herself a representative of the second generation of Holocaust survivors, initially understood postmemory as a process of transmitting trauma within the family. Her later works[4] distinguish between "the postgeneration as a whole and the literal second generation in particular" ("The Generation", 114). Likewise, Gary Weissman in *Fantasies of Witnessing: Postwar Efforts to Experience the Holocaust* notes that, while the term "third generation" has been most commonly

[3] A similar claim appears in Daniel Mendelsohn's *The Lost: A Search for Six of the Six Million*: "I was rich in keepsakes, but had no memories to go with them" (182). Alain Finkelkraut also articulates the way the legacy of the Holocaust dominated his life: "The Holocaust I never forgot. On the contrary, I couldn't stop thinking about it. Deep ignorance, curiously enough, went along with this obsession" (36).

[4] Hirsch's extensive study on postmemory inludes such works as "Family Pictures: *Maus*, Mourning, and Post-Memory" (1992), "Past Lives: Postmemories in Exile" (1996), *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory* (1997), "Surviving Images: Holocaust Photographs and the Work of postmemory" (2001), "The Generation of Postmemory" (2008), and *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust* (2012).

applied to survivor's grandchildren, it has also been broadened to include most Jewish Americans born in the 1960s and 70s.

Undoubtedly, the historical and cultural context that influenced the shaping of the third generation into a distinct social group, also found its reflection in the narrative structure of their fiction. For several decades after the tragic events of the Holocaust, the Jewish American literary scope was marked by a relative avoidance of direct descriptions of violence, and even if "survivors of the late 1940s frequently wanted to talk about their Holocaust experiences [they] were discouraged from doing so" (Novick 3). The writers were concerned largely with the impact of trauma on the present-day lives of victims, with their inability to heal psychological wounds. Now, when less of the survivors remain, the role of the third generation is to preserve the testimonies that have not yet been recorded. Contemporary authors have a unique role in transmitting the legacy of the Holocaust as they are the last generation that will be able to communicate with the witnesses of atrocities, the last link that connects their ancestors with future generations.

At the same time, as the temporal distance increases, authors become less restrained by requirements of truth, less emotionally and ethically confined to Adorno's demand for "no poetry after Auschwitz" (34). Hirsch clarifies that "postmemory . . . creates where it cannot recover. It imagines where it cannot recall" ("Past Lives" 664). As Michael Rothberg points out in *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*, "memory's anachronistic quality – its bringing together of now and then, here and there – is actually the source of its powerful creativity, its ability to build new worlds out of the materials of older ones" (5). In their attempts to reconstruct the past, authors use imaginative inventions to combine true historical testimonies with the blanks of missing knowledge.

This dichotomy of the real and fantastic in the context of the narrative of violence can be considered a characteristic of Foer's writing and is a recurrent theme in Jewish American fiction. "As the Holocaust recedes in time and we face the end of direct, survivor testimony, the obligation to preserve the memory by other means becomes all the more critical" (The New Diaspora 7). By infusing the story of historical traumas with fantastic elements, the novelist engages in what has been defined as Jewish magical realism, where, as suggested by Wendy Faris, "realism and the fantastic [are

combined] in such a way that magical elements grow organically out of the reality portrayed" ("Scheherezade's Children" 163). Its highly stylized narrative, that involves mythical characters, unlikely or impossible events and broken chronology, challenges the reader to distinguish between fact and fiction, as "real and fantastic, natural and supernatural, are coherently represented in a state of equivalence" (Stähler 6). Caroline Rody explains the paradigm of this literary trend in "Jewish Post-Holocaust Fiction and The Magical Realist Turn":

> Departing from the midcentury norm of realist plots about assimilating Jewish Americans, and building on magical renderings of Yiddishkeit (European Jewish culture) in the work of their great immigrant precursor Isaac Bashevis Singer, as well as magical links to Jewish tradition in the stories of Bernard Malamud and Cynthia Ozick, and surrealist and fantastic Holocaust representations by the graphic novelist Art Spiegelman and the Israeli writer David Grossman, a contemporary generation of Jewish writers uses magic to fuel impossible, paradoxical, elegiac recuperations: postmodern, post-Holocaust plots of quest for origins. (39)

Foer's novels are specifically studied within the framework of this genre by Jenni Adams in "The Dream of the End of the World: Magic Realism and Holocaust History in Jonathan Safran Foer's *Everything is Illuminated*" and Jo Langdon in "Incredibly Close Encounters: Magical Realism and the Intimate Elegies of Jonathan Safran Foer's *Everything is Illuminated* and *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close.*" One reason, Adams says, that Foer's narratives of historical traumas can be accounted for as examples of magical realist fiction, is because they depict the violence of the past that strongly resists realistic representation. The adaptation of the techniques of magical realism and the fictionalization of a story provide opportunity to express the inexpressible. In the context of brutality associated with such mass atrocities as the Holocaust, the 9/11 attacks and the war in the Middle East, "we are dealing with [events] which test our traditional conceptual and representational categories," comments Saul Friedlander, who calls these atrocities "events at the limits" (2-3). Magical realism may thus offer a possibility to portray human experience in a way that conventional realism is unable to express.

The primary aim of magical realism is the "destabilization of the possibility of transparency and completeness in narration" (Adams 60). Magical realist texts "help to deconstruct the univocal authority that characterizes much realistic fiction;" "it is an

extension of realism in its concern with the nature of reality and its representation" (Faris, *Ordinary Enchantments* 142). In the postmodern sense, these narratives reject the idea of a singular truth and offer a multiplicity of perspectives. "Magical realist texts are subversive," writes Rody. "Their in-betweenness, their all-at-onceness, encourages resistance to monologic political and cultural structures, to totalitarian discourses of all kinds" (41). This allowed critics to praise magical realism for its ability to more closely resemble postmodernist multivocal reality, for, as Robert Scholes writes, "reality is too subtle for realism to catch it. It cannot be transcribed directly. But by invention, by fabulation, we may open a way toward reality that will come as close to it as human ingenuity may come" (13).

In his introduction to the special issue of *Symbolism*, dedicated to Jewish magic realism in fiction, Axel Stähler points out, that the discourse of magical realism can be considered an inherent peculiarity of Jewish representation of reality: "characterized by the reduction to the absolute essentials, it is a bare bones fragmentary representation of slivers of reality which forces the reader to fill in the gaps imaginatively" (3). Therefore, Stähler continues, in Jewish consciousness the notion of "reality" is replaced with the idea of "truth," "the context-determined constructedness of representations" (6). Within the topics of history and the continuity of the past, this provides a chance to allegorically reflect on the opaqueness of memory and represent the authors' acknowledgement of the limits of the artistic representation of trauma. As Scott Simpkins notes, "The magic realist's predilection toward the unreal may also reveal an awareness of the impossibility of successful signification—complete information transference—as magic is used to flaunt these same limitations" (154). It is essential for writers such as Foer, who consider themselves, in Rody's words, to be "belated, distant, and inadequate tellers, writing not out of personal witness, but rather from oblique access to events nevertheless formative in their individual development" (46).

As concluded in Hayim Yerushalmi's *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* the new generation does not question "whether or not to have a past, but rather what kind of past shall one have" (99). As the authors attempt to access the missing information, the portrait of the Old World becomes enhanced with images from Eastern European folklore and myths which adds a new perspective to the problem of conceptualizing the

violence of the Holocaust. Having been raised with inherited memories, they pass on the stories, images and beliefs among which they grew up. As Berger comments, “collectively, the third generation reveals the truth that memory and trauma, even in the face of silence, form an ineluctable part of the human experience, and that the attempt to transform the legacy of Holocaust trauma into history will, no matter the format, continue in the future” (158).

These processes, characteristic of the recent Jewish American literary movement, are not only confronted in Foer’s fiction, but are also reflected in the writer’s personal search for a connection with the Jewish collective memory of violence. While the subjects of the three novels are fundamentally different, autobiographical influences in the plotlines of all three books are apparent: Foer has confirmed that this is his conscious choice for creative writing. In an interview with Suzie Mackenzie for *The Guardian*, Foer expresses his belief that all writing is to some extend autobiographical: “Has to be. There is nowhere for it to come from but from the author. Every character, every event—even if the book is set in Japan in 1400 BC—is autobiographical.” And, Foer continues, even though the process of writing does not specifically intend learning about oneself, "that is what happens. When you read something you have written, you have to confront some of the lies you have been telling yourself." Thus, writing becomes an experiment, a novelist’s laboratory, which, as Mackenzie concludes, allows Foer to discover his own identity through a fictional plot.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the novels are created as intensely personal stories that illustrate an individual’s experience of well-known and well-documented cases of mass violence: the Holocaust, the 9/11 terrorist attacks, and the war in the Middle East. The author’s fiction which is to a large extent based on the personal negotiation of his family’s past trauma, becomes his means to find a relation to the body of shared ethnic identity. In an interview for *the Guardian*, he explained that before starting work on his first novel, he “never thought about those things. . . . Now, I guess I’d have to say I was wrong and that clearly these are important to me” (qtd. in Mackenzie 2005).

Foer’s first novel *Everything is Illuminated* proved that the topics of ethnic background and the legacy of violence are of major importance in his fiction. As the author declared in his interview for *The Tabletmag*: “I did a very Jewish thing: writing a book with

explicitly Jewish content about a young person coming to terms with his Jewish identity" (Kirsch: September 16, 2016). The novel is an autobiographical account of an attempt to reestablish connection with the traumatic past; it is based on a history of mass violence and is provoked by a personal experience of a violent accident. Foer's personal story behind the novel's conception is described in Suzie Mackenzie's 2005 article for *The Guardian* entitled "Something Happened":

> His writing began with a picture—a photograph his mother showed him of the woman who was supposed to have saved his grandfather from the Nazis during the war. He can no longer remember when he first saw it. Perhaps it was during the explosion[5]: it's something a mother might do for her young traumatized son, show him a photo that would tell him a story of survival. Something terrible had happened on that day, June 18 1941, but some good had come from it. She, Esther, had come from it, and, by extension, Jonathan. (Mackenzie)

As talking about Holocaust experiences was considered a taboo in Foer's family, the novelist's urge and attempt to reconstruct the missing parts of his past are representative of postmemorial activity. Thus, *Everything is Illuminated* can be considered a prototypical example of the third generation's fiction. Foer explains that while he cannot say to have any perceptible relationship with his family's violent past and wouldn't consider himself traumatized, the traumatic events strongly influenced the tone of his upbringing: "there were things that my grandmother was unable to talk about, and my mother inherited those silences, and I inherited those silences, and my kids will inherit those silences." Foer indicates that silence in itself is a powerful means to transmit trauma and the legacy of violence. He explains that the form and content of his fiction "might mean that I'm exhibiting symptoms of something, not that I'm diagnosing it" (interview for *The Channel 4*).

The second novel, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, is also a largely autobiographical account of the writer's personal negotiation of the effect of mass

[5] The critic alludes to the explosion, which took place during a chemistry class when Foer was at secondary school. Foer remembers the explosion to be "very, very loud, very powerful," so that he was thrown back through the classroom's door, his hands were severely burnt. His two best friends who were at the table during the experiment were affected considerably more, with second- and third-degree burns over between 20% and 30% of their bodies and had to undergo reconstructive surgery and skin grafts. Foer has repeatedly described this event as the most affecting in his childhood, which allowed him to have a personal relation to such issues as survivor's guilt and psychological escape from traumatizing memories.

violence. While its narrative appears to abandon the writer's interest in the topic of the Holocaust, it preserves the structure of the intergenerational connection through the experience of violence. The story depicts an eight-year-old boy, Oskar Schell, who is the grandson of survivors of the Dresden bombing and, at the same time, the grieving son, who lost his father in the 9/11 attacks. Here, the system of the intergenerational transmission of trauma is similar to the model, which Foer presented in his first novel. As with *Everything is Illuminated*, the second novel reflects on the authors' personal experiences of violence, and is his attempt to negotiate such issues as a child's response to trauma, survivor's guilt, and the descendants' responsibility to remember historic tragedy. Similar to the message of his first novel, Foer again declares that only through obtaining information about the violent event and facing reality can witnesses overcome their grief.

In the third novel, *Here I Am*, Foer concentrates on the most current conflicts that influence American Jews in the twenty-first century. The plot is based on the theme of emotional connection of American Jews with Israel as their symbolical homeland, and the possibility of its destruction during the war with Palestine. The writer extends the narrative of violence over space and time, including into the novel detailed descriptions of the four generations of Holocaust survivors, where one half of the extended family lives in the United States and the other in Israel.

In each of the three novels, Foer shows the prolonged effect which violence has on humans and allows victims to find relief only decades later after a long and difficult process of negotiating their traumas. The writer believes that withdrawal from reality and distrust of the world, which are usual responses to traumatic experiences, cannot help victims' psychological healing. The author uses this scheme to illustrate the prolonged effect that violence has on both victims and witnesses, and to show its transmission through generations. He draws a connection between the three generations of men, from grandfathers to grandsons, and roots the grandchildren's troubles and insecurities in the choices made by the first generation who experienced past atrocities and historical horrors firsthand. Every group of characters has to go through a peculiar quest in order to regain control of their psyche and each of the generations is characterized by a specific response to trauma.

The oldest generation, the survivors, are overwhelmed by their experience of violence and remain devastated for long years afterwards. In these characters, Foer creates a metaphor of traumatic memory, which has an unavoidable and uncontrolled influence on the lives of victims' descendants. It is not accidental that every character in this group has some sort of disability that impairs communication with his family: Safran Foer in *Everything is Illuminated* is too old and appears in the storyline only through the narrative of other protagonists, Thomas Schell in *Extremely Loud* is unable to speak, the gentile grandfather in *Everything is Illuminated* claims to be blind, and Isaac in *Here I Am* cannot stand upright because his knees are always bent. The three old men are "silent presences" in the text, an allegory of Hirsch's concept of postmemory. In other words, as Cathy Caruth explains in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History*, there is "no direct access to others', or even our own, histories" (11). Either mute as Thomas Schell, blind as the Grandfather, demented and locked up in a senior citizen home as Isaac in *Here I Am*, or on his deathbed as Safran Foer, they are wounded, crippled by their pasts and untrustworthy narrators of historical violence. The author intends to illustrate how victims' narrative is distorted by trauma, thus leaving the reality of past violence inaccessible to later generations. This response to violence is discussed in Slavoj Zizek's monograph *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections*: "The very factual deficiencies of the traumatized subject's report on her experience bear witness to the truthfulness of her report, since they signal that the reported content 'contaminated' the manner of reporting it" (4).

Lapses in communication between the generations, impossibility to narrate traumatic experiences and the unrepresentability of violence indicates that, for victims of these atrocities, memories are still alive and haunting. Novick remarks, that "memory . . . has no sense of the passage of time; it denies the 'pastness' of its objects and insists on their continuing presence" (4). Caruth similarly explains the connection between testimonial narratives and reality, arguing that the descriptions of trauma become in itself a traumatic experience, a "referential return" to events that the victim attempts to forget: "The story of trauma, then, as a narrative of a belated experience, far from telling of an escape from reality – the escape from a death, or from its referential force – rather attests to its endless impact on life" (7).

In other words, trauma is not "assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated possession of the one who experiences it. To be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or event" (Caruth 2-3). It is not a coincidence that the grandfathers in Foer's novels, after they realize the impossibility to express their trauma, inevitably disappear in the abyss of the past: both in *Everything is Illuminated* and in *Here I Am* the grandfathers commit suicide while in *Extremely Loud* Thomas Schell is trapped in a symbolic no man's land of an airport's waiting lounge.

With the exception of *Here I Am*, the second generation is left on the margins of Foer's novels. At the same time, it is apparent that cruel and greedy Alex's father from *Everything is Illuminated,* Thomas Schell from *Extremely Loud*, who constantly tries to prove his ingenuity, and self-asserted Zionist Irv in *Here I Am*, are all influenced by the choices of their fathers even though neither of them has much information about their families' past trauma. They function as a barrier between the previous generation of survivors and the next generation whose role is to establish a new beginning for the family. In her definition of the second generation of Holocaust survivors, Hirsch argues:

> The protective shield of trauma itself, they function as screens that absorb the shock, filter and diffuse the impact of trauma, diminish harm. In forging a protective shield particular to the postgeneration, one could say that, paradoxically, they actually reinforce the living connection between past and present, between the generation of witnesses and survivors and the generation after. ("The Generation of Postmemory" 125)

The connection which Hirsch refers to is revived in the youngest characters of Foer's novels – the third generation of the invariable triad of protagonists. These young men start their journeys unaware of their families' past or, even, showing little interest in history altogether. Once they are faced with atrocities that defined the life of their families, they are given a choice whether to continue the tradition of traumatic negation and psychological escape or to confront reality and transform the legacy of victimhood. In this choice, Alex from *Everything is Illuminated* abandons his naïve plans to immigrate to the States and confronts his father to tell him to leave the family he has been abusing. Oskar in *Extremely Loud* learns about the diverse nature of trauma and realizes that people's suffering cannot be graded into more or less painful. Jacob in *Here I Am* claims responsibility for virtual adultery and faces reality of his personal and marital crisis.

The young protagonists' ability to overcome the grief of the past and focus on realistic opportunities offered by the future, creates a distinctive contrast for the behavior of their grandfathers. These two models of post-traumatic attitude constitute specific responses to historical violence and are illustrative of the theory of the after-effects of trauma as described in *Writing History, Writing Trauma* by Dominick LaCapra. Following Freud, LaCapra divides responses to trauma into two types: "acting out" (which corresponds to Freud's idea of *melancholia*) on the one hand, and "working through" (the Freudian concept of *mourning*) on the other. The first form of remembering instills traumatic memories into the individual's present, who, by holding onto the traumatic past, is unable to overcome the distress and work towards the productive future. In Foer's novel, the grandparents are literal examples of "acting out" their memories of violence, as their lives are dominated by their trauma. LaCapra writes:

> [T]rauma, instead of calling for processes of working-over and working through, may be valorized as a limit experience or as stigmata demanding endless melancholy or grieving, whose mitigation or rendering in narrative is perceived as objectionably consoling or even sacrilegious. (xiv - xv)

Foer's representatives of the third generation, Alex and Jonathan in *Everything is Illuminated*, Oskar in *Extremely Loud* and Jacob in *Here I Am*, are also initially burdened by the past and try to escape the responsibility of traumatic knowledge. These characters negotiate their traumas through escape into the realm of imagination, which later proves essential to the process of constructing their own narratives of trauma. Sidra Ezrahi in *By Words Alone* (1982) points out that such a desire to fictionalize reality is caused by the need to extend the limits of imagination to describe the most violent extremes of human experience: "even realism flounders before such reality" (3). Incorporating imaginary details into pitiful historical facts is well familiar to Foer and has been used as a structural element in all three novels. Moreover, and most importantly, it is Foer's personal means to overcome his own inherited trauma. As the novelist commented on the process of construction of *Everything is Illuminated*:

> My mind wanted to wander, to invent, to use what I had seen as a canvas, rather than the paints. But, I wondered, is my family's experience of the Holocaust exactly that which cannot and should not be imagined? What are one's responsibilities to "the truth" of such a traumatic event, and what is "the truth"? Can historical accuracy be replaced with imaginative accuracy? Objectivity with mind's eye? (Mullan)

In the plot of *Everything is Illuminated*, even after Jonathan learns the true story of the Nazi massacre, he chooses to imagine the events, because the reality of knowing the truth about violence seems unbearable. Similarly, in *Extremely Loud* the quest to find information about the violent event is counterpoised by a wish to fictionalize reality and escape into the world of fantasy. The fantastic, thus, becomes a means of escape in the protagonists' negotiation of their personal traumas, a temporary solution for the psychological crisis they go through.

The fantasy, however, cannot provide a solution to the characters' position of instability and emotional upheaval, it does not serve as a permanent medication for their distress. The author seems to imply that only through facing the truth and narrating violent experience is it possible to move beyond trauma towards acceptance and healing. Particularly in the latest novel, the imaginary world loses its appeal and becomes an avenue of escape from challenging events in real life, a sign of cowardice and lack of action. The imaginary world, which in *Here I Am* is presented in the form of simulation communities, on-line games and virtual communication, is shown to be a distracting nuisance that interferes with the characters' ability to correctly respond to actual reality.

Such reactions to violence are resonant with the concept of *Menschlichkeit*[6] which defines the Jewish philosophy of living and corresponds with the stereotypes of masculinity. Brett Ashley Kaplan in *Jewish Anxiety and the Novels of Philip Roth* connects this distinctive aspect of the Jewish character with stereotypical victimhood, which is deeply embedded in the Jewish American consciousness: "Jewish anxiety is a doubled anxiety around past and future victimization as well as a phobia about becoming the very thing one has been historically conditioned to loath most, that is a perpetrator" (4). In his 1963 essay *Writing About Jews,* Roth criticized a rabbi in America who "chose to remain a victim in a country where he does not have to live like one if he chooses" and who demonstrated a "pathetic tendency to invoke the six million to justify his timidity" (205). Roth also accused Bellow, Malamud, and Mailer for suggesting that the Jewish literary hero cannot be violent or transgressive.

[6] The term Menschlichkeit was coined in 1976 by Irving Howe and is commonly used to refer to the Jewish practices of honesty, humaneness, decency and compassion.

Foer likewise addresses the male gender bias, inherent in the Jewish American mainstream consciousness, and constructs his characters as a counter-image to the masculine ideals of the world they live in. His characters are intellectuals, non-violent "schlemiels," among them one jewelry-maker, two writers, one sculptor, and one university student. They are better at contemplating their troubles than trying to stand up to them, that is why the quests which they undertake to face the reality of violence and negotiate trauma become, at the same time, a means of self-exploration, a way to understand the limits of their personal abilities.

The possibility to restart the family's traumatic continuum arises with the death of the grandfather, which becomes a metaphor for the family's connection with the violent past of the Holocaust. After a literal or figurative suicide, Foer's young protagonists gain the ability to escape the void of trauma. Although this does not eliminate the legacy of violence, the characters accept the power to rewrite their own story. In Foer's non-fiction work *Eating Animals*, which advocates the writer's decision to become a vegetarian, he describes a similar process: "We could retell our stories and make them better, more representative or aspirational. Or we could choose different stories. The world itself had another chance" (11). Foer expresses his strong belief in a process of reconstruction, that it is possible to rebuild one's own family history. Throughout his books, Foer emphasizes not only the need to remember, acknowledge, confront one's past, but also the possibility for renewal, moving forward and not getting consumed by the paralyzing traumas of the past.

This is to say, then, that in Foer's novels, the narrative about the mechanisms behind the legacy of violence is finalized by an optimistic message of renewal and rebirth. Even though, the author believes, violence is not a one-time experience and is relived by victims and transmitted to their children and grandchildren, each generation has their own perspective on the traumatic past and their own narrative of trauma. The differences in his characters' ethnicity and background only serve to indicate the universal nature of trauma, similar to how references to various mass tragedies provide for a worldwide picture of brutality.

This study will analyze in detail the peculiarities of the representation of violence and trauma in each of Foer's three fictional works. His novels are based on distinctly

different historical events and, due to the substantial time span between the publications of the first and the latest books, were written in noticeably different social and cultural contexts. The author's personal experience of living with his family's memory of the Holocaust is depicted alongside recent and vivid events of the 9/11 terrorist attacks and his growing awareness of the conflict in the Middle East. In each case, however, depictions of violence serve as a fundament of the characters' quest to establish their ethnic identity and their position within the history of their families.

The first chapter, "Imagined Violence and Historical Nightmares in *Everything is Illuminated*," explores how the narrative of violence is represented in Foer's first novel. The difficulty of testimonial accounts of the Holocaust, which is the central topic of the novel, determines the author's use of the concept of the fantastic to describe the unspeakable atrocities of history. This approach becomes characteristic in Foer's research of major disasters that struck mankind over the twentieth and twenty-first centuries and finds its representation in the following novels.

The second chapter, "'Stuff That Happened to Me': Narratives of Violence in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close,*" addresses the representation of violence in Foer's second novel. Written in response to the terrorist attacks of the 9/11, *Extremely Loud* is concerned with the limitations of impersonal, factual accounts of mass violence and draws on personal narratives of trauma to present the most objective picture of brutality. In order to show the universal nature of evil, the author widens his perspective to also include other violent events, among them the Dresden bombing and the bombing of Hiroshima.

The third chapter of this thesis, "'Uses of a Jewish Fist': Violence and Masculinity in *Here I Am,*" analyses Foer's latest novel and aims to show how the topic of historical violence is incorporated into the realistic story set in present-day America. Here, as in the previous novels, the novelist addresses the process of transmitting trauma over several generations of victims, and establishes the connection between the real and the imaginary layers of the storyline. Foer, however, emphasizes that fantasy provides only temporary solution for the characters' feelings of instability and insecurity. Only through facing reality, even in its most brutal and distressing form, can an individual find consolation and hope for the future.

CHAPTER I

IMAGINED VIOLENCE AND HISTORICAL NIGHTMARES IN *EVERYTHING IS ILLUMINATED*

> The end of the world has come often, and continues to often come. Unforgiving, unrelenting, bringing darkness upon darkness, the end of the world is something we have become well acquainted with, habitualized, made into ritual. It is our religion to try to forget it in its absence, make peace with it when it is undeniable, and return its embrace when it finally comes for us, as it always does.
>
> (Foer, *Everything is Illuminated* 210)

The process of combining past and present, and looking for a continuity of events provide the basis of any identity formation. In "Monument and Memory in a Postmodern Age" Andreas Huyssen explains that "remembrance as a vital human activity shapes our links to the past, and the ways we remember define us in the present. As individuals and societies, we need the past to construct and to anchor our identities and to nurture our vision of the future" (9).

This idea gains particular importance within Jewish ethnic thinking, where remembrance may symbolize "the permanence of God's guardianship of the Jews—and of His wrath when they stray" (Novick 4). Judaism puts special emphasis on historical inclusiveness and connectedness of events, so much so that it has been called "a religion of time, religion of history" (Heschel, 99).

In contemporary Jewish American literature history-centered plots constitute a substantial part of texts, while historical allusions and the concept of memory acquire a status of ethnic identification. Stephen Wade writes that "contemporary Jewish-American writing has found renewal and impetus . . . in the historical experience that has shaped their forbearers' perceptions and identities. The period of rejection and the writing from assimilated positions has proved to be only germination stage" (12). Philippe Codde also notes that some young Jewish American authors, Jonathan Safran

Foer among them, “revisit almost obsessively the . . . histories that took place before their time” (“Keeping History at Bay” 676).

Foer has admitted that the topics of memory and collective historical heritage are particularly important in his fiction. The motif of remembering and recreating the past is central in his first novel, *Everything is Illuminated* (2002). One of the novel’s characters summarizes this idea: “It is important that we remember.—Remember what?—It is not so important, but that we should remember. It is the act of remembering, the process of remembrance, the recognition of our past . . . We must go backward in order to go forward” (36-37). In another episode another character notes that “Jews have six senses: touch, taste, sight, smell, hearing . . . memory” (198).

Although *Everything is Illuminated* is commonly referred to as an example of Holocaust fiction (as in the studies of Emily Miller Budick, Caroline Rody, Jenni Adams and others), the novel’s scope is not limited to literal depictions of this historical atrocity. While the violence of the Nazi genocide is the climactic point of the plot, the author’s interest lies not in the statement of the historical facts but in claiming their legacy within contemporary culture. That is why the novelist creates a vivid picture of manifestations of brutality which include abuse within the family, ethnic prejudices, and allusions to real religious conflicts of the past.

At the same time, the historical horrors of the Holocaust, although their descriptions are intentionally obscure and often distinctly metaphorical, always lie in the background of the storyline. Bergman and Jucovy explain the role of the Holocaust in Jewish collective consciousness, saying that “from a psychoanalytic point of view the Jewish people can be seen not only as a socio-religious group, but also as a group united by common trauma” (5).

This equilibrium between historical facts and their intricate ramifications stems from a particular concern expressed by Foer and other Jewish American authors about their loss of connectedness with their historical past. According to Marianne Hirsch and Irene Kacandes, “chronological distance . . . increases the problem of conceptualisation and communicability” (4). The elusiveness of historical facts and detachedness of the actual story are the main themes discussed in contemporary Jewish American fiction and are

usually parallel to the motifs of fragmentation of the self and loss of true identity. Given the importance of historical memory in Jewish ethnic consciousness, the problems of amnesia and loss of cultural background are equated to the falsity of identification. The authors then try to "recreate the devastating past that lies beyond the pale of their own experiences" (Hirsch and Kacandes 674) through imaginative techniques and fantastic episodes. In *Popular Culture and the Shaping of Holocaust Memory in America,* Alan Mintz writes:

> [I]t is little wonder, for as time passes, the authors of the stories, memoirs, film scripts, and plays are increasingly less likely to have been witnesses, or even sons and daughters of witnesses, to the catastrophe and their works correspondingly more dependent on the meditation of the imagination. (81)

However, the ethical imperative for keeping the memory of the Holocaust alive, requires that the legacy of historical violence should be conveyed in its true form. Jewish literary critic Sidra deKoven Ezrahi argues that the authors' "degrees of access to historical trauma reflect their relative claims to authenticity and artistic license" (53). Here, the critic insists that imaginative responses become less valid as the distance from the actual atrocity increases, which makes second and third generation authors less legitimate than direct testimonies of Holocaust survivors. The debate concerning the ability of later generations' to represent the true horrors of actual historic events continues even despite scholarly acceptance of Hirsch's theory of post-memory. Judith E. Doneson in *The Holocaust in American Film* notes that many scholars still equate imaginative representations of the Holocaust to disrespect towards the victims' horrific experiences.

> What is at the core of the dilemma? Abuse of the Holocaust? Desanctification? Lack of knowledge? Vulgarization? Trivialization? Too much memory? Too little memory? Whom do we please? Which survivors? At every juncture, one confronts what on the surface seem to be breaches of the sacredness of the Holocaust. Serious scholars and writers engaged in soul-wrenching investigation of the Final Solution often evoke phrases like "imagining the unimaginable," and "speaking the unspeakable," expressions that imply both rigid obedience to its singular horror and the inability of those who were not there to understand. For them, the Holocaust cannot be relativized or subjected to misappropriate comparisons. (226)

Foer's reply to this key allegation in "appropriating the suffering of [others]" (Strakosch 136) has been expressed multiple times both through his fiction and in his interviews. In

a 2011 talk with Michael Williams, when the novelist was accused of misinterpreting a historical tragedy[7] for his own needs, the writer answered: "Writing is how I'm most careful with things. The intentions seem to me to be purely good" (The Wheeler Centre talk, 2 October 2011). Foer advocates that testimonial narratives are not the only adequate form to preserve the experiences of historical violence. Recourses of fictional writing allow authors to convey the trauma through the perspective of a diachronic analysis, incorporating not only actual events, but also their psychological impact and legacy through generations. Consequently, Foer's narrative of violence fuses historic moments represented in realist forms with fantastical representations of the victims' psyche; it dives into dreamscape and connects it with various traumas of people around the world.

Everything is Illuminated, which is the author's own way to negotiate his family's memory of the Holocaust, becomes a postmodern metafictional narrative of collective trauma. The novel's plot is based on Foer's real experience during a trip he took as an undergraduate to Ukraine in 1999, which in a later interview the writer referred to as an incredibly foolish journey. The writer's interest was provoked by the history of his family, which tells that his grandfather, Lewis Safran, lived with his young wife and their baby daughter in a village in Western Ukraine. When the Nazis invaded Eastern Europe, the village was destroyed overnight, leaving all of its 2,400 residents dead. Foer's grandfather miraculously escaped the massacre but lost his wife and child. After the war, he met his second wife in a Polish camp for displaced persons and together with her went to the United States where they had two children.

After the death of Lewis Safran in 1954, no testimonies about his life and traumatic experiences in Ukraine were kept. Urged by the need to learn more about his Eastern European roots, Foer went to find his maternal grandfather's shtetl.

> I did not intend to write *Everything is Illuminated*. I intended to chronicle, in strictly nonfictional terms, a trip that I made to Ukraine as a 22-year-old. Armed with a photograph of the woman who, I was told, had saved my grandfather from the Nazis, I embarked on a journey to Trachimbrod, the shtetl of my family's origins. The comedy of errors lasted five days. I found

[7] The interview was dedicated to Foer's second novel, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close,* and its negotiation of the 9/11 trauma.

> nothing but nothing, and in that nothing—a landscape of completely realized absence—nothing was to be found. Because I didn't tell my grandmother about the trip—she would never have let me go—I didn't know what questions to ask, or whom to ask, or the necessary names of people, places, and things. The nothing came as much from me as from what I encountered. (Foer qtd. in Strakosch)

On his journey to the site of destruction, Foer could not reconstruct his ancestral past and it was this absence that made him start creating memories. In an interview for *The Telegraph*, Foer testifies: "If I didn't have my family history, I probably would not have been a writer" (qtd. in De Moor 16). In another interview, Foer similarly explains the reason behind his need to create his past:

> There wasn't a grandfather, there wasn't a dog, there wasn't a woman I found who resembled the woman in the book—but I did go, and just found—nothing. It's not like anything else I've ever experienced in my life. In a certain sense the book wasn't an act of creation so much as it was an act of replacement. I encountered a hole—and it was like a hole that I found was in myself, and one that I wanted to fill up. (Wagner for *The Times,* 2002)

The opportunity to imaginatively fill in the absent presence of traumatic memory appeared when during undergraduate study in philosophy at Princeton University Foer took an introductory course in creative writing with Joyce Carol Oates. The final paper for the course later resulted in a full-length novel, published in 2002 by Houghton Mifflin, earning the author a National Jewish Book Award and a *Guardian* First Book Award.

As *Everything is Illuminated* was created on the edge between a testimonial recording of personal experiences and creative writing, the text of the novel combines factual information about the violent history of the Holocaust with metaphorical representations of violence. The novel is grounded on a narrative of brutality that is based on well-known historical facts, but, at the same time, it is intended as a subjective account of personal experiences. The discourse of brutality is divided into depictions of real historic atrocities and fantastic scenes that describe unrealistic incidents.

The story follows an American student named Jonathan Safran Foer on his journey to Lutsk, a town in Ukraine, with a mission to find a woman who supposedly helped his grandfather Safran escape the Nazi massacre and leave for America. Jonathan's voice,

however, does not directly appear in the text, and the reader understands his presence only through the narrative of his Ukrainian guide and translator Alex "Shapka" Perchov. During their trip into the heart of the country, Jonathan and Alex become close friends and their characters develop into mirror images of each other. Alex mentions that he was born in 1977, "the same year as the hero of this story" (1), and both young men are university students at the time of their journey. More importantly, however, they are both the grandsons of the survivors of the Holocaust, and, even though Jonathan's family is Jewish and Alex's is gentile, they are bearers of the trauma transmitted by their grandfathers, who were witnesses of two very similar mass tortures committed by the Nazis. Before the journey, neither of the young men possesses knowledge of their families' past, thus their quest to find the sight of the massacre becomes a metaphor for the need to reestablish the continuity of history. At the same time, Foer "twins"[8] the two protagonists in order to show the victims' trauma in parallel with the trauma of perpetrators.

After Jonathan's departure, the two friends continue to exchange letters: in the novel, Alex's detailed letters with a meticulous account of the journey alternate with chapters from a book which Jonathan one by one sends to his new friend in Ukraine. Jonathan's book tells the fantastic story of his imagined great-great-great-great-great-grandmother Brod and her descendants, and finishes with the destruction of Trachimbrod, the shtetl which Jonathan and Alex attempted to find.

In the novel's climactic scene, Alex's Grandfather, the third protagonist who serves as a driver for Alex and Jonathan, confesses that during the Nazis' invasion he betrayed his best friend to the Nazis: when all residents of the village were asked to identify the Jews among them, he was the only one who pointed to Herschel, his closest friend and almost a member of his family. The latter was then taken to the synagogue together with the other Jewish residents of the shtetl, locked inside and burnt alive.

The mission of the old man is to bring the young protagonists to the sight of the massacre, as he is the only one who is able to drive among the three travelers. At the same time, he claims to be blind and travels with a seeing-eye dog. His alleged

[8] The contemporary practice when a person is "twinned" with an actual victim of the Holocaust is described by Peter Novick in his Introduction to *The Holocaust in American Life*.

blindness functions as a reference to the story of Oedipus, who stabs out his own eyes because of the overwhelming feeling of guilt after killing his father and marrying his mother. As the famous character from Sophocles' tragedy, the Grandfather can no longer look on the horrors that his actions have created, therefore has to move through his life in a symbolic darkness. The burden of his past persecutes the old man years after the events and finally pushes him to suicide. The novel ends with the Grandfather's letter to Jonathan, his suicide note explaining the reasons behind his long-term silence.

In *Everything is Illuminated* Foer shows the horrors of the Holocaust both through conventional realistic scenes which depict historical violence, and by allegorical episodes, where the reader has to decipher the meaning of allusions and intertextual connections. The novel is divided into two parts, both of which narrate the same events. Alex's conventional realist style is opposed and paralleled by Jonathan's myth-oriented magical-realist fiction. While Jonathan invents an allegorical story of his centuries-long genealogy, Alex questions the morality of falsifying the historical past.

> We are both being very nomadic with the truth, yes? The both of us? Do you think that this is acceptable when we are writing about things that occurred? If your answer is no, then why do you write about Trachimbrod and your grandfather in the manner that you do, and why do you command me to be untruthful? If your answer is yes, then this creates another question, which is if we are to be such nomads with the truth, then why do we not make the story more premium than life? (179)

Alex's understanding of the ethics of creative writing is reflected in his part of the novel's text. His narrative starts off in a light-hearted manner with intentionally frequent references to sexuality, violence and stereotypical details of a working class life in an Eastern European country. His depictions of violence are entertaining and are often used for comic relief: "Mother dubs me Alexi-stop-spleening-me!, because I am always spleening her" (1), "I have an aristocratic smile and I like to punch people" (4), "unless I do not want to, I do what Father tells me to do. Also, he is a first rate puncher" (6).

These episodes are reminiscent of what Henry A. Giroux in his "Racism and the Aesthetic of Hyperreal Violence" calls ritualistic violence: "utterly banal, predictable, and often deeply masculine" scenes. Brutality here "does not recast ordinary events or

attempt critically to shift sensibilities. On the contrary, it glows in the heat of the spectacle, shock, and contrivance, yet it is entirely formulaic" (339).

Such episodes, however, are found only in the first few chapters of *Everything is Illuminated*. The tone of the narration shifts as the story unfolds and the discourse of violence gains emotional context:

> [Father] touched me on the shoulder, and I will tell you that it felt like a touch from the devil. "Shut up!" I told him, and seized his wrist. I will inform you that this was the first occasion that I have ever moved at him with violence. "I am sorry," I said, and let his wrist free. "I will make you sorry," he said. I was a lucky person because he had so much vodka in him that he did not have regard enough to punch me. (214)

Foer starts to raise ethical questions about the actions and manners of his characters, inevitably rooting their behavior in their families' past. The author makes it clear, that Alex's seeming virility and ruthlessness are fake and stem from the fear of his abusive father. The father's cruelty, in its turn, is a result of his desire to prove himself in a big and busy port city in Southern Ukraine, where, as the reader finds out only by the end of the novel, his family moved after the Nazi massacre from a small village. As a first generation migrant from a rural to urban society, he tries to adapt to the norms of masculinity that are stereotypical of the lower middle-class men.

The idea that later generations are influenced by the trauma of their ancestors is central in Foer's novel. After Alex learns that his grandfather was a witness of the violence of the Holocaust, he confesses to Jonathan that because of his previous obliviousness of the past horrors, he was deprived not only of pain, but of happiness as well.

> I must inform you, Jonathan, that I am a very sad person. I am always sad, I think. Perhaps this signifies that I am not sad at all, because sadness is something lower than your normal disposition, and I am always the same thing. Perhaps I am the only person in the world, then, who never becomes sad. Perhaps I am lucky. (227)

Foer addressed the concept of intergenerational transmission of traumatic memory in all three of his novels. In *Everything is Illuminated* this is represented in Alex's role as a translator. As all of the employees of his father's Heritage Touring travel agency were on holiday, the young man was asked to be a one-time translator because he "performed

recklessly well in [his] second year of English at university" (2) and was "fluid" (4) in it. Notably, Alex's knowledge of English is far from perfect, so in his translations he often chooses wrong words and incorrect grammar. Alex tells in a letter to Jonathan "You were perhaps accounting upon a translator with more faculties, but I am certain that I did a mediocre job" (23).

While his lack of language skills adds a comic element to the novel, it also symbolizes the postmodern unreliability of the text and difficulties of trauma narration. The narrator's incorrect use of language and his free interpretations of events allow Foer to symbolically address the themes of the representation of historical trauma and narration of violence. The protagonist openly acknowledges that his translations are unreliable when he chooses to avoid explaining the Grandfather's emotions:

> "Fuck," Grandfather said. I said, "He says if you look at the statues, you can see that some of them no longer endure. Those are where Communist statues used to be." "Fucking fuck, fuck!" Grandfather shouted. "Oh," I said, "he wants you to know that that building, that building, and that building are all important." "Why?" the hero inquired. "Fuck!" Grandfather said. "He cannot remember," I said. (58)

Alex's responsibility as a translator is to pass the knowledge of the horrifying events further, to ensure their survival within the collective memory. Foer metaphorically represents this idea in an episode, when the protagonist is presented with a ring, the only remaining trace of an unnamed victim of the massacre: "The ring does not exist for you. You exist for the ring. The ring is not in case of you. You are in case of the ring" (192). At the same time, positioned between the witness (in this case, his grandfather) and the recipient (Jonathan), the translator both affects and is affected by the testimony.

As Jonathan operates within the field of postmemory, he discovers that it is impossible for him to achieve objective knowledge of the horrific events. Trachimbrod, the site of the tragedy, symbolically remains empty and consumed by darkness even after the protagonists arrive there. The Grandfather also departs "off into the darkness" (190) when he is immersed into his memories: "'What do you mean we're here?' the hero asked. 'Tell him it is because it is so dark,' Grandfather said to me, 'and that we could see more if it was not dark.' 'It is so dark,' I told him. 'No,' she said, 'this is all that you would see. It is always like this, always dark.'" (184)

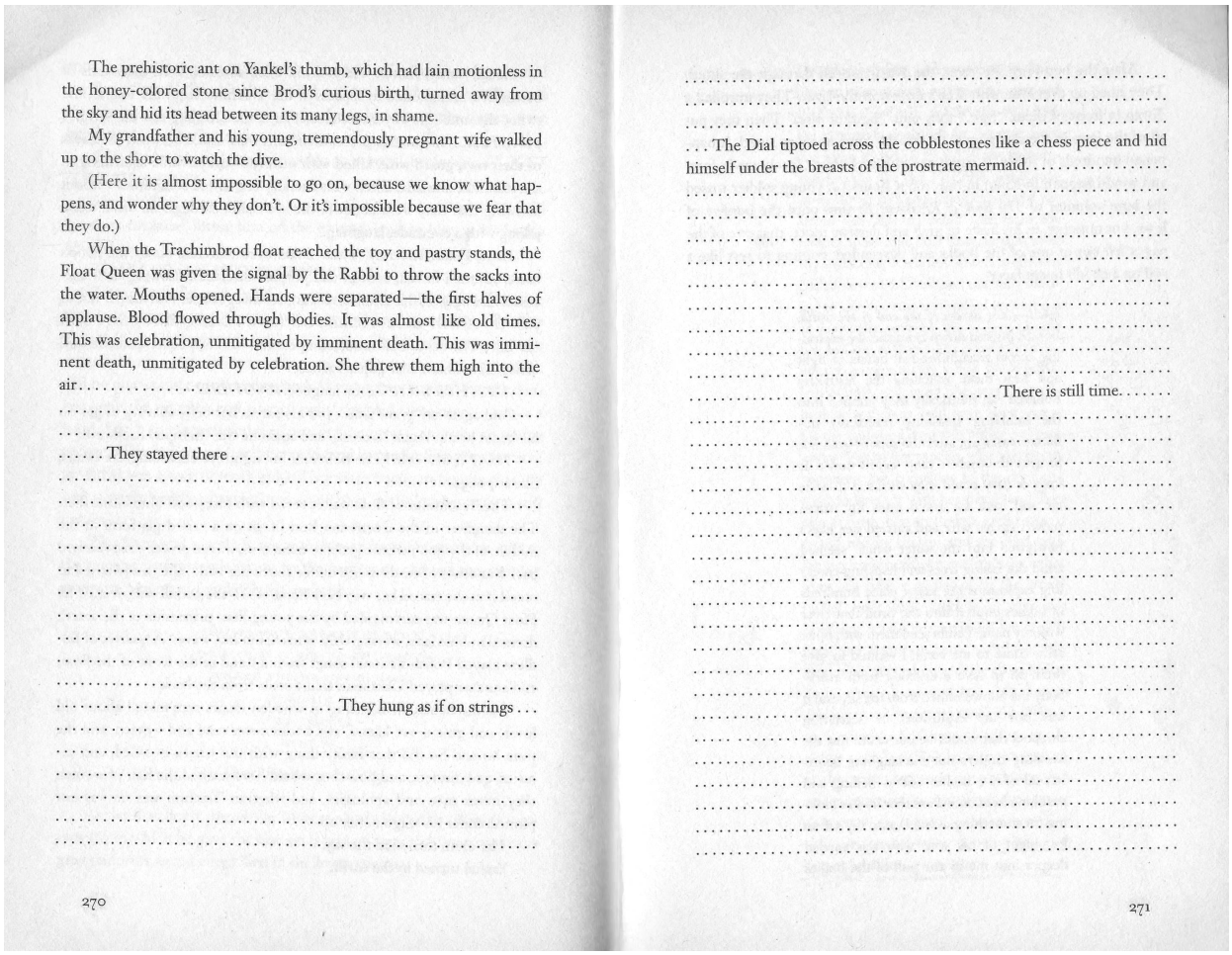
Even when the testimony of the true events is finally available for the protagonists, they are unable to face it: midway through the account, Jonathan states, "I don't want to hear any more," Alex stops translating, and the Grandfather says "It is not true" (186). At the same time, once the narration of violence begins, it is impossible to avoid it because, as a revival of the actual events[9], it affects listeners in the same way as it affected witnesses. "What made the story most scary," notes Alex in his letter to Jonathan, "was how rapid it was moving. I do not mean what happened in the story, but how the story was told. I felt that it could not be stopped" (186).

The problem and difficulty in retelling the past trauma, and failure to access the historical tragedy result in the total collapse of linear narrative. Foer literally and typographically excludes the exact moment of the Nazi attack on the shtetl by filling most of the page with a series of dots (see fig. 1), until the narration continues on the next page with the words "After the bombing was over" (272).

Even the titles of the chapters that depict the atrocity differ in typography from the rest of the book: instead of being written in a line like the rest of the text, they are arranged as a horizontal wave (see fig. 2), which alludes to the archetype of water and represents fluidity and the blurriness of the traumatic narrative.

Devoid of material attributes and inaccessible from the outside world, the chronotope of the Holocaust in *Everything is Illuminated* gains the characteristics of a dark fantasy. In fact, it functions as a separate space which cannot overlap with the present-day world where the protagonists exist: even artifacts that can serve as a proof of the past cannot cross the border into the real world. Thus, when Jonathan is given a box with victims' personal belongings to bring with him to America, it mysteriously disappears on his journey away from the sight: it is stolen from under the pillow that Jonathan is sleeping on during his night travel on a train.

[9] Due to the emotional intensity of traumatic memories, testimonial accounts are often said to be perceived by the narrators as a revival of actual traumatic experiences. Van der Kolk and McFarlane write, for example, that "The past is relived with an immediate sensory and emotional intensity that makes victims feel as if the event were occurring all over again" (491).



The prehistoric ant on Yankel's thumb, which had lain motionless in the honey-colored stone since Brod's curious birth, turned away from the sky and hid its head between its many legs, in shame.

My grandfather and his young, tremendously pregnant wife walked up to the shore to watch the dive.

(Here it is almost impossible to go on, because we know what happens, and wonder why they don't. Or it's impossible because we fear that they do.)

When the Trachimbrod float reached the toy and pastry stands, the Float Queen was given the signal by the Rabbi to throw the sacks into the water. Mouths opened. Hands were separated—the first halves of applause. Blood flowed through bodies. It was almost like old times. This was celebration, unmitigated by imminent death. This was imminent death, unmitigated by celebration. She threw them high into the air.....

..... They stayed there .....

.....They hung as if on strings . . .

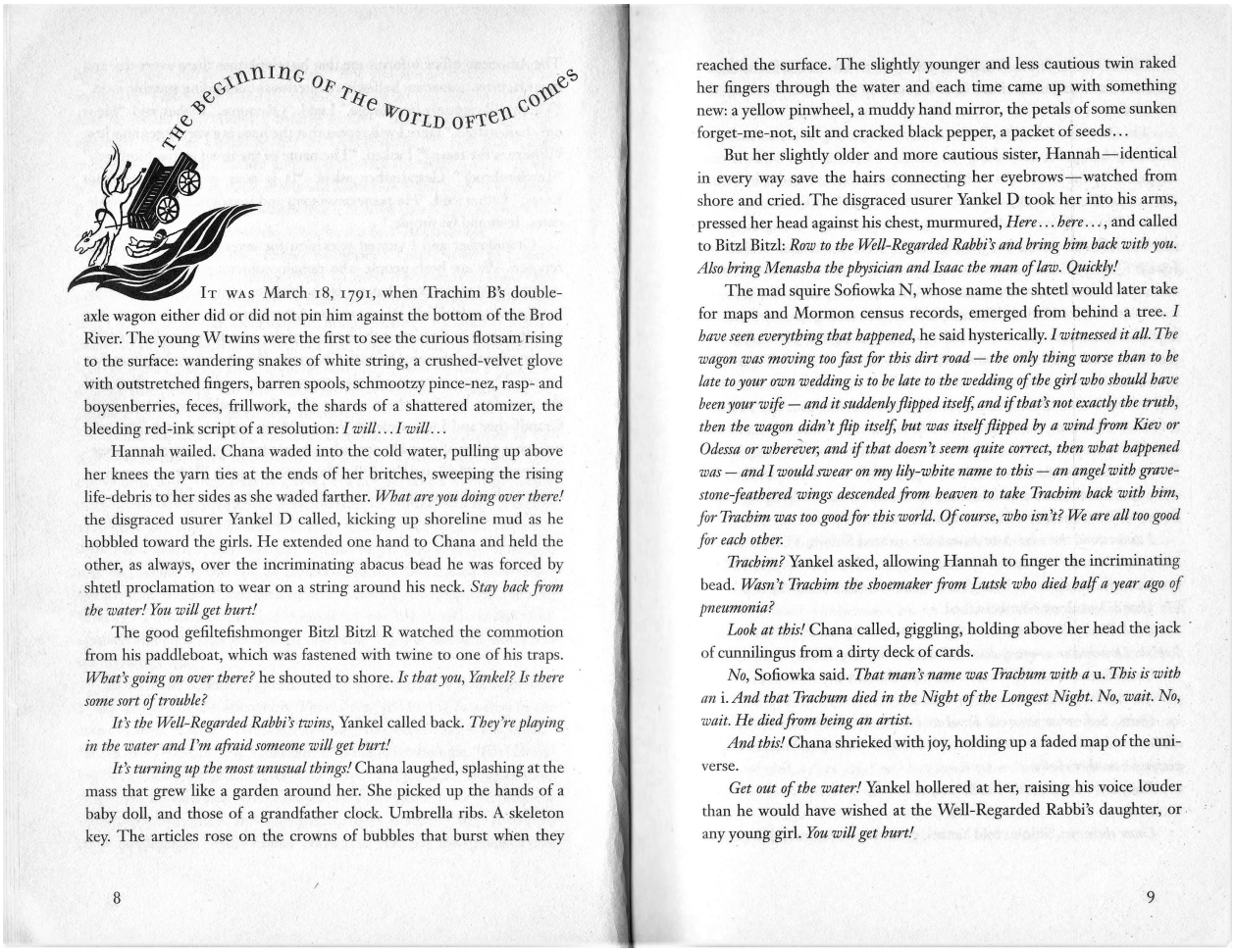
270

. . . The Dial tiptoed across the cobblestones like a chess piece and hid himself under the breasts of the prostrate mermaid.....

.....There is still time.....

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Fig.1. Jonathan Safran Foer, *Everything is Illuminated* (Penguin Books, 2003), pp. 270-271



THE BEGINNING OF THE WORLD OFTEN COMES

IT WAS March 18, 1791, when Trachim B's double-axle wagon either did or did not pin him against the bottom of the Brod River. The young W twins were the first to see the curious flotsam rising to the surface: wandering snakes of white string, a crushed-velvet glove with outstretched fingers, barren spools, schmootzy pince-nez, rasp- and boysenberries, feces, frillwork, the shards of a shattered atomizer, the bleeding red-ink script of a resolution: *I will… I will…*

Hannah wailed. Chana waded into the cold water, pulling up above her knees the yarn ties at the ends of her britches, sweeping the rising life-debris to her sides as she waded farther. *What are you doing over there!* the disgraced usurer Yankel D called, kicking up shoreline mud as he hobbled toward the girls. He extended one hand to Chana and held the other, as always, over the incriminating abacus bead he was forced by shtetl proclamation to wear on a string around his neck. *Stay back from the water! You will get hurt!*

The good gefiltefishmonger Bitzl Bitzl R watched the commotion from his paddleboat, which was fastened with twine to one of his traps. *What's going on over there?* he shouted to shore. *Is that you, Yankel? Is there some sort of trouble?*

It's the Well-Regarded Rabbi's twins, Yankel called back. *They're playing in the water and I'm afraid someone will get hurt!*

It's turning up the most unusual things! Chana laughed, splashing at the mass that grew like a garden around her. She picked up the hands of a baby doll, and those of a grandfather clock. Umbrella ribs. A skeleton key. The articles rose on the crowns of bubbles that burst when they

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reached the surface. The slightly younger and less cautious twin raked her fingers through the water and each time came up with something new: a yellow pinwheel, a muddy hand mirror, the petals of some sunken forget-me-not, silt and cracked black pepper, a packet of seeds…

But her slightly older and more cautious sister, Hannah—identical in every way save the hairs connecting her eyebrows—watched from shore and cried. The disgraced usurer Yankel D took her into his arms, pressed her head against his chest, murmured, *Here… here…*, and called to Bitzl Bitzl: *Row to the Well-Regarded Rabbi's and bring him back with you. Also bring Menasha the physician and Isaac the man of law. Quickly!*

The mad squire Sofiowka N, whose name the shtetl would later take for maps and Mormon census records, emerged from behind a tree. *I have seen everything that happened,* he said hysterically. *I witnessed it all. The wagon was moving too fast for this dirt road — the only thing worse than to be late to your own wedding is to be late to the wedding of the girl who should have been your wife — and it suddenly flipped itself, and if that's not exactly the truth, then the wagon didn't flip itself, but was itself flipped by a wind from Kiev or Odessa or wherever, and if that doesn't seem quite correct, then what happened was — and I would swear on my lily-white name to this — an angel with grave-stone-feathered wings descended from heaven to take Trachim back with him, for Trachim was too good for this world. Of course, who isn't? We are all too good for each other.*

Trachim? Yankel asked, allowing Hannah to finger the incriminating bead. *Wasn't Trachim the shoemaker from Lutsk who died half a year ago of pneumonia?*

Look at this! Chana called, giggling, holding above her head the jack of cunnilingus from a dirty deck of cards.

No, Sofiowka said. *That man's name was Trachum with a* u. *This is with an* i. *And that Trachum died in the Night of the Longest Night. No, wait. No, wait. He died from being an artist.*

And this! Chana shrieked with joy, holding up a faded map of the universe.

Get out of the water! Yankel hollered at her, raising his voice louder than he would have wished at the Well-Regarded Rabbi's daughter, or any young girl. *You will get hurt!*

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Fig.2. Jonathan Safran Foer, *Everything is Illuminated* (Penguin Books, 2003), pp. 8, 9

The only character who connects the real world and the world of trauma is Lista, a witch-like figure who turns out to be the witness and the only survivor of the massacre that destroyed Trachimbrod. She is depicted as an old toothless woman with white hair falling to the ground who lives in a secluded white cottage in the middle of a field, surrounded by lines of white clothes drying in the wind. The symbolism of the portrait is filled with archetypal images that are reminiscent of fairy-tale characters: long hair as a sign of wisdom, lack of teeth as a prediction of death, the color white as a symbol of purity, the wind as a symbol of the passing of time.

Lista, as an assistant character or a mythical guide figure, has to test the protagonists before offering them her help in their assignment: at first she repeatedly refuses to acknowledge that she knows anything about the photograph which Alex presents to her.

> "I do not want to pester you," I said, "but have you ever heard of a town dubbed Trachimbrod?" "No," she said, picking up her corn and removing its skin. "Have you ever heard of a town dubbed Sofiowka?" "I have never heard of that either." . . . "Have you ever witnessed anyone in this photograph?" She examined it for several moments. "No." I do not know why, but I inquired again. "Have you ever witnessed anyone in this photograph?" "No," she said again, although this second no did not seem like a parrot, but like a different variety of no. . . . "Have you ever witnessed anyone in the photograph?" "No," She was humming again, with more volume. "Have you ever witnessed anyone in the photograph?" "No," she said. "No." I saw a tear descend to her white dress. It too would dry and leave a mark. "Have you ever witnessed anyone in the photograph?" I inquired, and felt cruel, I felt like an awful person, but I was certain that I was performing the right thing. "No," she said. "I have not. They all look like strangers." . . . "Has anyone in this photograph ever witnessed you?" Another tear descended. "I have been waiting for you for so long." (117-118)

After Lista finally confirms that she knows where the Trachimbrod shtetl used to be situated before the Nazi invasion, Alex's incorrect use of the verb "witness" gains a new meaning and becomes a statement of her direct experience of the violent events. The old woman leads the three protagonists to an empty field where the massacre took place.

> We pursued her through many fields and into many forests. . . . We pursued her over roads made of rock, and also over dirt, and also over grass. We pursued her over three stairs, which were very broken. . . . It was so dark that it was becoming almost impossible to witness her. . . It was like she was a ghost, moving in and out of our eyes. (183)

Foer implies that, similar to the symbolic unreachability of the sight of the mass murder, traumatic memories are beyond access for those who try to learn about them. At the same time, despite the inaccessible nature of the past trauma, it is, nevertheless, absolutely necessary to find ways to communicate the memory of violence. In *Everything is Illuminated* the only means to approach the exact events of the bombing and destruction of the shtetl is through imagination. This is resonant to what Toni Morrison calls "literary archaeology":

> On the basis of some information and a little bit of guesswork you journey to a site to see what remains were left behind and to reconstruct the world that these remains imply. What makes it fiction is the nature of the imaginative act: my reliance on the image—on the remains—in addition to recollection, to yield up a kind of truth. ("The Site of Memory" 302)

The process as described by Morrison is similar to the task Jonathan has to complete when writing about the Trachimbrod massacre. He has to reconstruct history from the sparse information available to him, which results in the appearance of a magical-realist narrative within the novel, the fable of Trachimbrod. “The origin of a story is always an absence” (230) remarks Foer’s narrator. The novel-within-the-novel, which Jonathan writes after his trip and shares with Alex, makes no pretense in being the only possible reflection of the truth. Instead, through its distinct fantastic and allegorical form, it acknowledges and draws attention to its unreliability.

The fable of Trachimbrod, thus, rejects the idea that truth is only available through testimonial realism. In the postmodern sense, the narrative of the fable draws attention to the limitations of language to adequately represent historical tragedy. If violence cannot be transcribed directly, then, it can be accessed only through imagination. Thus, in the fable of Trachimbrod, Foer constructs a narrative that is an equally valid description of the events as an actual “true” history. In this sense, storytelling assimilates functions of experience, and narrative form shapes interpretation.

The story of Trachimbrod spreads over more than two centuries and starts when on March 18, 1791, “Trachim B’s double-axle wagon either did or did not pin him against the bottom of the Brod River” (8). The strange accident on the river gathers on-lookers from the near-by shtetl, who, to their surprise, notice that a new-born baby girl appears among the objects floating in the water: “… [in] the frothing water, … in the middle of the string and feathers, surrounded by candles and soaked matches, prawns, pawns, and silk tassels that curtsied like jelly-fish, was a baby girl, still mucus-glazed, still pink as the inside of a palm” (13).

The girl, who is Jonathan’s imagined great-great-great-great-great-grandmother Brod (and the first member of the Foer family), clearly possesses supernatural qualities: she is born from the waters of a river, her face has perfect adult features and she later becomes an object of uncontrolled desire for all men in the shtetl[10], while women consider her to be “a sign from the devil himself” (20).

[10] “By her twelfth birthday, my great-great-great-great-great-grandmother had received at least one proposal of marriage from every citizen of Trachimbrod: from men who already had wives, from broken

Such extensive use of fantastic elements at the very beginning of Trachimbrod's history allows connecting the fable not only with the narrative structure of magic realism, but also with mythology. The birth of baby Brod is abundant in archetypal signs, alluding to other mythical births: a birth of a fully grown Athena, birth of Aphrodite from the foam of the sea, emergence of baby Moses from the river, or even Christ's birth from the Virgin Mary. Foer, thus, allows his protagonist to create a mythology, which is also "a valid alternative to illuminate one's origins" (Codde, "Transmitted Holocaust Trauma" 65).

In this part of the novel, the logic of events corresponds to the fantastic and allegorical rationale of mythical thinking. The discourse of violence here also obeys the principles of the uncanny that we can find in, for example, traditional fairy-tales and other folklore genres. Such depictions of violence are, in effect, abstractions: even the most graphic scenes involving rape, injury, torture or murder are often less affecting for readers than if they would have been perceived as a realistic narrative. The sensory impact of these highly disturbing scenes is undermined by a breakdown in rational ties, the cruelty of the story is neutralized by the apparent absurdity of events. Kowalewski explains the functioning of realistic depictions of violence in overtly unrealistic narratives:

> [In] the richest possible example of a novel or a story that is conspicuously "voiced," whose author flaunts the wordiness of his words, and who constantly and variously reminds us that we are never out of a verbal orbit in reading his work . . . the violence such fiction includes will be largely, perhaps even completely, absorbed and denaturated and denied an imaginative autonomy more compelling than its generative fuel of verbal display. (23)

For example, the scene when Brod's husband, the Kolker, gets injured by a disc-saw blade is physically highly improbable, however the detailed description of the accident creates a graphic and memorable story:

> A disk-saw blade from the chaff splitter had spun off its bearings and raced through the mill, caroming off walls and scaffold beams while men jumped to cover. The Kolker was eating a cheese sandwich on a makeshift stool of stacked flour sacks, lost in thought about something Brod had said about

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old men who argued on stoops about things that might or might not have happened decades before, from boys without armpit hair, from women with armpit hair, and from the deceased philosopher Pinchas T." (90)

> something, oblivious to the chaos around him, when the blade hopped off an iron rod (left carelessly on the ground by a mill worker who was later struck by lightning) and embedded itself, perfectly vertical, in the middle of his skull. He looked up, dropped his sandwich to the floor—witnesses swore the slices of bread switched places in midair—and closed his eyes. . . . There was hardly any blood, except from his nose and ears, and the blade seemed to be holding everything in its good and right place, more or less. . . . In fact, the Kolker was barely hurt at all. He had regained consciousness in only a few minutes and been able to walk himself, parade himself, through the maze of muddy capillaries to the office of Dr. Abraham M. (125-126)

The paragraph creates a distinctive aesthetic of grotesque violence, where "the dramatic storytelling, parody, and an appeal to gutsy naturalism" (Giroux 346) celebrate absurdity and chaos. Parodic representations of brutality and excessive sexuality seem to break down conventions of mainstream fiction and present an alternative narrative that is shaped according to the pattern of textual play. Bernard Geisen in "The Trauma of Perpetrators: The Holocaust as the Traumatic Reference of German National Identity" writes: "Myths turn violence and unspeakably shocking experiences into a story that can be narrated and listened to. They transform the unbearable and absurd as a meaningful sequence of action—not necessarily presented as everyday banalities but as a process that will not offend the audience" (143).

For example, a vulgar love poem composed by the Kolker for his wife, appears to be an imitation of a traditional folk song:

> Weep not, my love,
> Weep not, my love,
> Your heart is close to me.
> You fucking bitch,
> Ungrateful cunt,
> Your heart is close to me.
> Oh, do not fear,
> I'm nearer than near,
> Your heart is close to me.
> I'll gouge out your eyes
> And pound in your fucking head,
> You fucking bitch whore,
> Your heart is close to me. (137)

Because the Trachimbrod story in *Everything is Illuminated* creates an alternative value system that celebrates bodily and sensuous life, it is possible to link its discourse to Bakhtin's carnivalesque cosmology system. Here, the ordinary structure is distorted in

order to create a space free from traditional social norms. The readers' expectations are disrupted by grotesquely exaggerated depictions of brutality "where pain is inflicted without any consequences, where an audience can laugh at the discomfort or dysfunction of a person or an institution without the implication of suffering" (Tracy 191).

The history of Trachimbrod, which started with the death of Trachim B. and the birth of baby Brod, later evolved into a festival, or a carnival, celebrating love and fertility. At first, a contest was held every year to find the body of Trachim B. or any remains of the wagon that sunk to the bottom of the river. Soon, however, residents realized the futility of this search and continued their annual tradition with a procession of highly decorated mechanical platforms and floats, a beauty pageant among the girls of the neighboring villages and a diving competition among young men. The celebration always finished with a mass orgy that produced sparks of light visible from outer space:

> People made wild, urgent love in the dark corners where houses met and under canopies of weeping willows. Couples cut their backs on the shells, twigs, and pebbles of the Brod's shallow waters. They pulled at one another in the grass: brassy young men driven with lust, jaded women less wet than breath on glass, virgin boys moving like blind boys, widows lifting their veils, spreading their legs, pleading—to whom? From space, astronauts can see people making love as a tiny speck of light. Not light, exactly, but a glow that could be mistaken for light—a coital radiance that takes generations to pour like honey through the darkness to the astronaut's eyes. (95)

The glow that is created by the lovemaking is symbolically reflected by the fire of the burning synagogue, illuminating the darkness of the night during the massacre—the image that gave Foer's novel its title. The image of light is in contrast to the darkness of the violence which Alex and Jonathan find at the sight of Trachimbrod after its destruction. The author recurrently switches between the denominators within the opposition of light and darkness, love and violence, compassion and mercilessness, innocence and guilt, drawing attention to the invariability of the concepts. Whether it is an allegorical scene or a witness's testimony, the ethical and moral meaning of good and evil remains unchangeable. Therefore, even in the fantastic realm of the fable, violence intrudes into the mythical structure of the fairy-tale: at the end of the

Trachimbrod story, bitter reality finds its way into the magical world and leads to the complete destruction of the shtetl.

Even though Foer intentionally excludes the exact moment of the destruction from the novel, he makes sure that the massacre is understood by the reader as a determinant of the text, an element which unifies the realistic and the fantastic layers. The description is first narrated in the chapter from the realistic part of the novel, told by Lista to Alex, Jonathan and the Grandfather at the exact place where the events took place. As the woman remembers the horrors, Alex is translating her words to Jonathan, which creates a kind of echo effect in the text: by repeating the testimony the young man is making the trauma his own, claiming his part of the violent experience.

> "They made us in lines," she said. "They had lists. They were logical." I translated for the hero as Augustine spoke. "They burned the synagogue." "They burnt the synagogue." "That was the first thing they did." "That was first." "Then they made all men in lines. You cannot know how it felt to have to hear these things and then repeat them, because when I repeated them, I felt like I was making them new again. . . . "It was in the middle of the town. There," she said and pointed her finger into the darkness. "They unrolled a Torah in front of them. A terrible thing." (185)

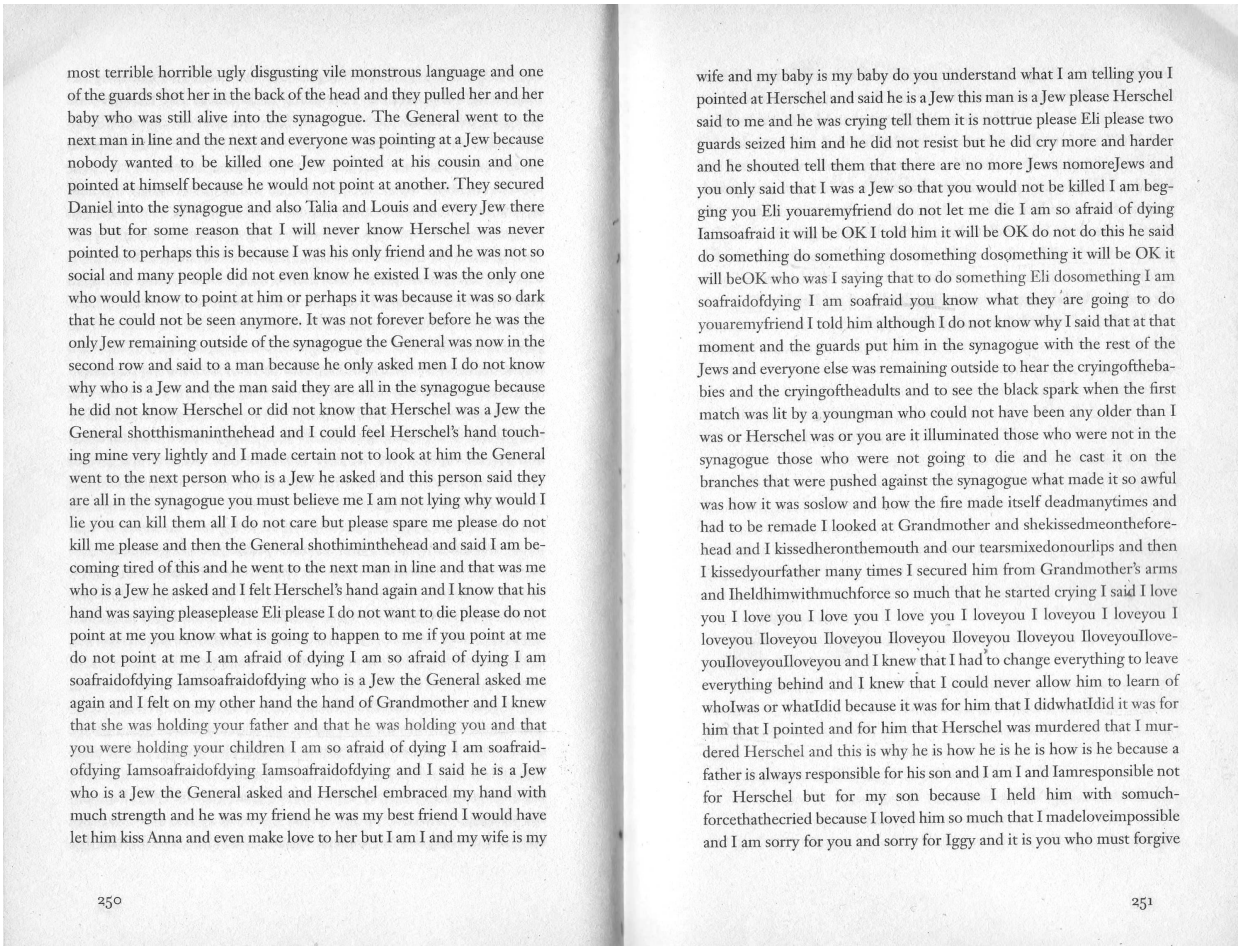
The Grandfather, who, as it turned out, was also a witness of the massacre, later remembers the slaughter in very similar words to what Lista said to the characters earlier: "They came in the most darkest time of the night. They had just come from another town, and would go to another after. They knew what they were doing, they were so logical. I remember with very much precision the feeling of my bed shaking when the tanks came. . . . They made us stand in lines" (247-249).

An almost identical description is also included into the Trachimbrod narrative: "After the bombing was over, the Nazis moved through the shtetl. They lined up everyone who didn't drown in the river. They unrolled Torah in front of them. . . . Then they put all of the Jews in the synagogue" (272). The scene also appears as a mysterious predictive dream, written down by Brod more than a century before the actual tragedy:

> The dream of the end of the world. Bombs poured down from the sky exploding across trachimbrod in bursts of light and heat those watching the festivities hollered ran frantically they jumped into the bubbling splashing

> frantically dynamic water not after the sack of gold but to save themselves they stayed under as long as they could. . . (272)

As the emotional and climactic centre of the novel, the scene of the shtetl's destruction is realized as a centralizing episode of the narrative. Foer forms a connection between the reader and the violent event by retelling the same story several times using distinctive voices of different narrators: an unclear recording of a predictive dream, an imagined fantastic story, and the witness's illegible testimonies, where words blend into one until they become almost undecipherable (see fig. 3).



most terrible horrible ugly disgusting vile monstrous language and one of the guards shot her in the back of the head and they pulled her and her baby who was still alive into the synagogue. The General went to the next man in line and the next and everyone was pointing at a Jew because nobody wanted to be killed one Jew pointed at his cousin and one pointed at himself because he would not point at another. They secured Daniel into the synagogue and also Talia and Louis and every Jew there was but for some reason that I will never know Herschel was never pointed to perhaps this is because I was his only friend and he was not so social and many people did not even know he existed I was the only one who would know to point at him or perhaps it was because it was so dark that he could not be seen anymore. It was not forever before he was the only Jew remaining outside of the synagogue the General was now in the second row and said to a man because he only asked men I do not know why who is a Jew and the man said they are all in the synagogue because he did not know Herschel or did not know that Herschel was a Jew the General shotthismaninthehead and I could feel Herschel's hand touching mine very lightly and I made certain not to look at him the General went to the next person who is a Jew he asked and this person said they are all in the synagogue you must believe me I am not lying why would I lie you can kill them all I do not care but please spare me please do not kill me please and then the General shothiminthehead and said I am becoming tired of this and he went to the next man in line and that was me who is a Jew he asked and I felt Herschel's hand again and I know that his hand was saying pleaseplease Eli please I do not want to die please do not point at me you know what is going to happen to me if you point at me do not point at me I am afraid of dying I am so afraid of dying I am soafraidofdying Iamsoafraidofdying who is a Jew the General asked me again and I felt on my other hand the hand of Grandmother and I knew that she was holding your father and that he was holding you and that you were holding your children I am so afraid of dying I am soafraidofdying Iamsoafraidofdying Iamsoafraidofdying and I said he is a Jew who is a Jew the General asked and Herschel embraced my hand with much strength and he was my friend he was my best friend I would have let him kiss Anna and even make love to her but I am I and my wife is my

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wife and my baby is my baby do you understand what I am telling you I pointed at Herschel and said he is a Jew this man is a Jew please Herschel said to me and he was crying tell them it is nottrue please Eli please two guards seized him and he did not resist but he did cry more and harder and he shouted tell them that there are no more Jews nomoreJews and you only said that I was a Jew so that you would not be killed I am begging you Eli youaremyfriend do not let me die I am so afraid of dying Iamsoafraid it will be OK I told him it will be OK do not do this he said do something do something dosomething dosomething it will be OK it will beOK who was I saying that to do something Eli dosomething I am soafraidofdying I am soafraid you know what they are going to do youaremyfriend I told him although I do not know why I said that at that moment and the guards put him in the synagogue with the rest of the Jews and everyone else was remaining outside to hear the cryingofthebabies and the cryingoftheadults and to see the black spark when the first match was lit by a youngman who could not have been any older than I was or Herschel was or you are it illuminated those who were not in the synagogue those who were not going to die and he cast it on the branches that were pushed against the synagogue what made it so awful was how it was soslow and how the fire made itself deadmanytimes and had to be remade I looked at Grandmother and shekissedmeontheforehead and I kissedheronthemouth and our tearsmixedonourlips and then I kissedyourfather many times I secured him from Grandmother's arms and Iheldhimwithmuchforce so much that he started crying I said I love you I love you I love you I love you I loveyou I loveyou I loveyou I loveyou Iloveyou Iloveyou Iloveyou Iloveyou Iloveyou IloveyouIloveyouIloveyouIloveyou and I knew that I had to change everything to leave everything behind and I knew that I could never allow him to learn of whoIwas or whatIdid because it was for him that I didwhatIdid it was for him that I pointed and for him that Herschel was murdered that I murdered Herschel and this is why he is how he is he is how is he because a father is always responsible for his son and I am I and Iamresponsible not for Herschel but for my son because I held him with somuchforcethathecried because I loved him so much that I madeloveimpossible and I am sorry for you and sorry for Iggy and it is you who must forgive

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Fig.3. Jonathan Safran Foer, *Everything is Illuminated* (Penguin Books, 2003), pp. 250, 251

The author stresses the universal nature of evil and underlines its continuity through the past, the present and the future. According to Giroux's categories of the representations of brutality, descriptions where violence "does not become an end in itself [but] serves to reference a broader logic and set of insights" are classified as symbolic violence.

> Instead of providing the viewer with stylistic gore that offers the immediacy of visual pleasure and escape, symbolic violence probes the complex contradictions that shape human agency, the limits of rationality, and the existential issues that tie us to other human beings and a broader social world. (Giroux)

The continuity of violence, the universal and unifying nature of trauma is an important theme in Foer's fiction, represented in the text through numerous symbols and metaphors. The novelist recurrently stresses that past brutality cannot be perceived as an isolated action but always reverberates into the present and the future. For example, the author shows how baby Brod is symbolically and literally colored with circumstances during which her life unfolds:

> [Her father] made a bed of crumpled newspaper in a deep baking pan and gently tucked it in the oven, so that [the baby] wouldn't be disturbed by the noise of the small falls outside. . . . When he pulled her out to feed or just hold her, her body was tattooed with the newsprint. TIME OF DYED HANDS IS FINALLY OVER! MOUSE WILL HANG! Or, SOFIOWKA ACCUSED OF RAPE, PLEADS POSSESSED BY PENIS PERSUASION, BECAME "OUT OF HAND." Or, AVRUM R. KILLED IN FLOUR MILL MISHAP, LEAVES BEHIND A LOST SIAMESE CAT OF FORTY-EIGHT YEARS . . . Sometimes he would rock her to sleep in his arms, and read her left to right, and know everything he needed to know about the world. If it wasn't written on her, it wasn't important to him. (43-44)

Even when the characters are unaware of the challenging historical context that accompanies their personal lives, it is nevertheless an integral part of their reality. Foer shows how, at the time when the Second World War was spreading towards Trachimbrod, Jonathan's grandfather Safran was using newspaper clippings to write secret love notes to his lover, an unnamed Gypsy girl. Here, the author deliberately highlights the detached and unemotional style of the newspaper chronicle and the characters' apparent lack of knowledge about the approaching catastrophe:

> *Meet me under the wooden bridge, and I will show you things you have never, ever seen.* The "M" was taken from the army that would take his mother's life: GERMAN FRONT ADVANCES ON SOVIET BORDER; the "eet" from their approaching warships: NAZI FLEET DEFEATS FRENCH AT LESACS; the "me" from the peninsula they were blue-eyeing: GERMANS SURROUND CRIMEA; the "und" from too little, too late: THE AMERICAN WAR FUNDS REACH ENGLAND; the "er" from the dog of dogs: HITLER RENDERS NONAGGRESSION PACT

> INOPERATIVE... and so on, and so on, each note a collage of love that could never be, and war that could. (233)

Doro Wiese in "Evoking a Memory of the Future in Foer's *Everything is Illuminated*" argues that this episode is a manifestation of the narrative process of "cutting and pasting." The interchangeability of the parts of the text, which equally serve to assert Safran's love to the Gypsy girl and to describe military actions of the German army, also signifies the possibility to switch between the direct and implied meanings of the text, between time and space of the described events. The reader, thus, also extends the narrative to encompass events that are not depicted in the novel. As the scholar explains, the reader, who is working "through the story caught in the twists and turns of its language and figuration, . . . might answer the call . . . and become social and responsive agent to this call" (4). In other words, through observing of the historical violence Foer draws the reader to become an actual witness of the events: "mediating other times, peoples and world, reading is precisely one of those practices that allow us to be others and to be haunted by difference in and from itself. It calls forth different times, peoples, and worlds so that these 'others' can haunt our present" (Wiese 5).

Foer again turns to contrasting oppositions of love and violence, hope and despair, youth and death, in order to convey the ubiquity of good and evil, which is one of the central themes of *Everything is Illuminated*, the leitmotif of the novel. The characters' personalities are shown to develop in accordance with the brutality they are exposed to, whether it is family abuse or witnessing mass murder. That is why it is important for them to acknowledge their past and learn about their family's traumatic history. An allegorical image of a link with the past is manifested through a symbol of "the prehistoric ant ... in the honey-colored amber" (13), which becomes a representation of the intactness of memory. The same symbol is used in Lev Shreiber's 2005 film *Everything Is Illuminated* which is based on Foer's novel. Here, the protagonist (Elijah Wood) inherits an extensive collection of objects that represent his connection with the family's history, among them an old photograph as an allusion to the past, the Star of Davis as a symbol of Jewish identity and a pendant of cicada fossil in amber, which symbolizes both the intactness, persistence and value of memory, and the mystery that goes with it. In the film these three objects become the motivation for the protagonist to start the quest for the family's history.

Foer uses the metaphor of an umbilical cord to refer to the connectedness of generations through the continuity of violence and the legacy of trauma. The wife of Safran, Jonathan's grandfather, when drowning in the river during the Nazi massacre, pulls her new-born daughter down into the water by the umbilical cord.

> [The baby] cried and she was perfectly healthy and she would have lived except for the umbilical cord that pulled her back under toward her mother who was barely conscious but conscious of the cord and tried to break it with her hands and then bite it with her teeth but could not it would not be broken. (273)

The author suggests that, even if the allegorical umbilical cord is disconnected over time, later generations unavoidably seek to restore their personal history and define their identity within the historical continuum however traumatic it may be. At the same time, it is a similarly destructive element, which is able to ruin the lives of those affected by the trauma.

The novel concludes with the grandfather's suicide note, which pleads that "they must begin again, . . . they must cut all of the strings . . . with everything they have known" (275). His personal story which was told in the previous chapters, illustrates the idea about the succession of violence through generations: the old man reveals that during a mass murder of Jews in World War II, he betrayed his best friend and handed him over to the Nazis in order to save his own life. He always blamed himself for the death of his best friend, therefore decided to leave the village where the tragic events took place. He explains to his grandson, Alex, that "[b]ecause I did not want your father to grow up so close to death . . . I did not want him to know of it, and live with it. This is why I never informed him of what occurred. … I desired to remove him from everything that was bad, but instead I gave him badness upon badness" (247). The Grandfather believes that his own traumatic experiences are the reason for both his son's abusiveness and his grandson's adversity. In his last letter the old man writes: "I would give everything for them to live without violence. Peace. That's all that I would ever want for them. Not money and not even love. It is still possible. I know that now, and it is the cause of so much happiness in me. They must begin again. They must cut all of the strings, yes?" (275).

The Grandfather's suicide is meant to be the symbolical interruption of the legacy of trauma, which allows Foer's characters to break down their attachment to the past violence and progress into the future. This motif is evocative of the processes that take place within the nations stigmatized by the trauma of perpetrators, such as, for example, post-Nazi Germany. The practice when following generations established their "moral distance" (128) from perpetrators of massive historical crimes was described by Bernhard Geisen in his analysis of the collective trauma of the German nation. The scholar explains that "in stigmatizing the generation of their fathers, the young Germans . . . could cut the links to the nation of perpetrators that was identified with the preceding generation" (128). This is to say, that "the circle of perpetrators was widened to include an entire generation, and the boundaries of the nation were changing" (129), which allowed the young Germans to escape the guilt and trauma of the past.

This paradigm summarizes the author's ethical position: while, as he highlights in the novel, bitter history has to be acknowledged and remembered, it must not be the only determinant of identity, transmitted through territories and generations.

In his next novel, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, Foer continues this topic, again addressing the theme of the legacy of historical violence and the continuity of trauma. The writer, however, expands the context and depicts the events that are not related to the Holocaust—the novel discusses such mass atrocities as the bombings of Dresden, Hiroshima, and the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre. Foer chooses these well-documented examples of mass violence to reveal their effect on an individual. Thus, the theme of violence is further unraveled to include events that are separated by time and distance, but united by their impact on humanity.

CHAPTER II

"STUFF THAT HAPPENED TO ME"[11]: NARRATIVES OF VIOLENCE AND TRAUMA IN *EXTREMELY LOUD AND INCREDIBLY CLOSE*

> We never have all that much to say to each other.
> (Foer, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* 104)

Foer's engagement with the discourse of violence and the narrative of trauma continued in his second novel *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, published in 2005. The novel tells the story of Oskar Schell, a nine-year-old boy trying to cope with the death of his father in the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center. On what the protagonist calls "the worst day," Oskar comes home early to find a number of voice messages on the answering machine from his father trapped in one of the burning towers. As soon as the boy finishes listening to the first few messages, his dad calls again for the final time, but Oskar is not able to pick up the phone. Instead, he hides the answering machine from his mother and grandmother and keeps the messages secret, a "secret that was a whole . . . that every happy thing fell into" (71). Thus, the boy not only has to deal with the shock of his father's sudden death, but is also overwhelmed by guilt from failing to provide support in his final moments. Devastated by the loss, Oskar gives himself bruises and invents the most implausible devices, such as birdseed suits to jump from burning buildings and bracelets that transmit the heartbeat of loved ones.

About one year after the tragedy, Oskar comes into his father's closet and accidentally finds an envelope with a key inside and the word "Black" written on it. Because Oskar imagines that the envelope was intentionally left for him by his father, the boy starts a quest to find a matching lock. The search takes him around all five boroughs into the homes of different New Yorkers with the same surname, Black. However, much as in *Everything Is Illuminated*, the clue for the protagonist's quest becomes a false lead and

[11] The protagonist of *Extremely Loud* keeps a journal which he calls "Stuff That Happened to Me" with images that literally or symbolically represent his experience of the 9/11 attack.

reveals nothing about the father's last days. Even though at the end Oskar manages to solve the riddle of the key, only his increasing awareness of traumas that others go through and sharing the story of his own loss with the people he meets help him reconnect with reality and come to terms with the death of his father.

The story of the terrorist attack on New York is told mostly through Oskar's own voice, which allows the author to show the character's traumatized mind and his struggle to overcome the personal tragedy. There are, however, several major voices in the novel. Chapters narrated by the protagonist alternate with unsent letters written by his paternal grandfather, Thomas Schell, a young sculptor who lost his fiancée Anna and their unborn child during the allied bombing of Dresden in 1945. Thomas miraculously survives the destruction, but his psyche is deeply scarred by the loss. In order to start his life anew, he moves to New York, where, seven years after the bombing, he accidentally meets and soon marries his fiancée's sister, Oskar's grandmother. Haunted by his past trauma, he leads a miserable life, avoiding his wife and spending most of his time at the airport or working at a jewelry-shop—a job he is not interested in. When he finds out that his wife is pregnant, Thomas leaves her and moves back to Dresden. The letters, every one of which is titled "Why I'm Not Where You Are," are addressed to his son, Oskar's father, whom Thomas never met.

The third voice in the novel is that of Thomas's wife, Oskar's paternal grandmother, who keeps a journal entitled "My Feelings" and addresses it to Oskar. Foer switches between narrators following an invariable structure: Oskar – grandfather – Oskar – grandmother, which allows the author to depict the same events from different perspectives, while simultaneously preserving the central role of the story of the young protagonist.

Oskar's memory of the 9/11 events, the grandfather's letters and the grandmother's journal provide personalized accounts of loss and pain, and allow Foer to compose an extended "multidirectional" (Rothberg) narrative of historical violence and trauma. Depictions of the Dresden and Hiroshima massacres, as well as graphic reports about the 9/11 attack, leads Philippe Codde to state that the novel's main theme is "some of

the remaining[12] historical traumas of the twentieth century that were left untouched in *Everything Is Illuminated*" (241).

At the same time, there is an essential difference in Foer's approach to the theme of historical violence in *Extremely Loud* compared to his first novel. In *Everything is Illuminated*, the author showed how collective trauma is transmitted through generations despite impaired connection between present-day reality and horrors experienced decades ago. The characters had to symbolically fill in the void of missing information about World War II by collections of isolated and disjoined memorabilia, which then miraculously disappeared from their possession. The novel was published in 2002 and, as a third generation Holocaust survivor, Foer expressed concerns about his right to claim heritage of the well-known tragic events.

Extremely Loud is, in Foer's own words, a response to the first novel: here, through an intensely personal story, the writer addresses the effects that mass violence has on an individual. If *Everything is Illuminated* discussed attempts to access a traumatic past, *Extremely Loud* shows the limits of representing painful reality. In his second novel, Foer aims to convey the consequences of an impersonal violent attack (whether in Dresden and Hiroshima during World War II or New York in 2001) on an individual victim. The author draws attention that in conventional accounts of mass violence "victims [are] treated as objects, as cases of a category without a face, a name, a place" (Geisen 114). In his interview with Joshua Wolf Shenk, the novelist commented on his own personal connection with the 9/11 attacks:

> If you are in my position, a New Yorker who felt the event very deeply and a writer who wants to write about things he feels deeply about – I think it is risky to avoid what's right in front of you. None of the ways people were talking about September 11 felt right for me. I don't buy into the way Bush talks about it. I don't buy into the way the 9/11 commission talks about it. It isn't that I don't believe them. It's just that they're not the tellings for me. (*MotherJones*, May/June 2005)

[12] In *Extremely Loud*, Foer seems to abandon his interest in the topic of the Holocaust. The only episode that directly elaborates on the theme of the Holocaust is the story of the grandfather's Jewish friend, who perished in one of Nazi's camps. The grandfather is obsessed to learn about the man's destiny after they lost contact during the war, which, as he believes, will help him find closure in his own story of World War II.

In other words, Foer's approach to his 9/11 narrative is based on a personalization of trauma and an attempt to provide a perspective for victims' voices by comparing them with the testimonies of other individuals across time and space. This is how the novelist expressed his position in a talk with David Swatling: "We need as many voices as possible because unfortunately our national storytellers about [9/11] have been politicians and they've been telling a story so different than most people I know experienced the day" (*Radio Netherlands Worldwide*, 4 Feb. 2010).

Foer's attempt to extend the depictions of violence over different eras and territories allows him to build what Michael Rothberg calls "multidirectional memory." The scholar suggests that only through "ongoing negotiation, cross referencing, and borrowing" is it possible to create a true narrative of violence, "productive and not privative" (3). Rothberg supports his argument explaining that "the dangers of the uniqueness discourse are that it potentially creates a hierarchy of suffering (which is morally offensive) and removes that suffering from the field of historical agency" (9). Such attitude, which is commonly expressed in the studies the Holocaust memory (as in the aforementioned works by Novick, Giesen and Rothberg), can be similarly applied to the topic of the 9/11 collective trauma.

While Foer has often described his novel as "a humanistic intervention into the 9/11 discourse, not a political one" (qtd. in Jon Catlin 10), several critics have pointed out that the author's choice to compare the terrorist attacks on September 11 with the attacks on Dresden and Hiroshima is not accidental: obviously, both the Dresden and Hiroshima bombings that caused severe losses among civilian populations, were inflicted by the United States.

> Roughly 25,000 civilians perished in the allied fire-bombing of Dresden. And the US atomic bombing of Hiroshima killed over 100,000. Nearly 3,000 Americans perished in the 9/11 attacks. We have by and large justified the former as a society in the name of winning World War II. Yet, from the same limited American perspective, 9/11 seems anomalous and uniquely evil, paving the way for political arguments for American exceptionalism. (Catlin 10)

By comparing the trauma narratives of violent attacks otherwise distant in space and time and inflicted by different perpetrators, Foer offers a more universal moral criterion

for addressing such mass atrocities. This idea is common for trauma fiction as a genre and was articulated, among others, by Zbigniew Herbert: "Books have a very important function in the world—a function more important now than it was before September 11th—which is to tell stories of individuals, stories in which people in other cultures can recognize themselves" (qtd. in Swatling).

Ironically, however, this approach to the 9/11 tragedy sparked a negative criticism of the novel which echoed across many reviews of *Extremely Loud*. Apparently, many readers were disappointed by the author's seeming evasion of the actual events and demanded the attack to be depicted as a "unique" example of inhumanity: some critics urged Foer to "just set the scene, build the suspense, and vividly depict the terror and outrage of the version of 9/11 most of us remember" (qtd. in Catlin, 10). Michel Faber, for example, in his review for *The Guardian* titled "A Tower of Babble," expresses strident disapproval of the novel:

> It is a triumph of evasion, enhanced with dozens of otiose photographs, rainbow colours and typographical devices, whose net effect is to distract the reader (and Foer) from harsh truths. It promises to take you to Ground Zero, but helplessly detours towards the Land of Oz, spending most of its time journeying through the Neverlands in between. (*Guardian*, 4 Jun. 2005)

Even though this critique appears unjustified, it expresses ethical concerns that surround representations of 9/11. Obviously, Foer's novel was not the only work of art to be criticized in the early and middle 2010s for addressing the subject of the 9/11 attacks. Many literary and cinematic attempts that explored the real images of the events were labeled disrespectful and inappropriate; for example, the first feature film to dramatize the attack, *United 93* (2006), was disapproved by some reviewers for being released "too soon." It is understandable, though, as structurally a fictional narrative requires some sort of resolution, "a closure of an easy, uplifting message at the story's conclusion" (Catlin, 11), but for a long time after the tragedy this was morally unacceptable.

In most texts depicting historic events, there is a fine line between the need to realistically memorialize a violent event and the attempt to imaginatively absorb and describe it. While the excessive naturalism of the plot might lead to accusations of

"exploiting … death, turning tragedy into leering pornography" (qtd. in Junod), fictional accounts of historic violence cause complaints about misplaced symbolism and distorted reality. This dilemma is valid for any work of fiction that describes well documented events, most recently, for example, a feature film about the 2011 mass murder in a Norwegian youth camp which became a subject of Erik Poppe's *U – July 22* (2018). Some critics claim that such violent events, the Holocaust and the 9/11 attacks among them, "exceed our ability to describe [them]" (Sorkin 37) and even decades later cannot be absorbed into fictional narrative. As expressed by Joyce Carol Oates in 2006, this connects the discourse of the terrorist attack with the trauma of Nazi perpetrations:

> September 11 has become a kind of Holocaust subject, hallowed ground to be approached with awe, trepidation, and utmost caution. The reader's natural instinct is to recoil from a purely fictitious treatment of so profound and communal a subject, for the task of fiction is to create a self-defined, self-absorbed, and highly charged text out of language, and the appropriation of communal trauma for such purposes would seem to be exploitative. ("Dimming the Lights")

Numerous calls for fidelity in 9/11 fiction should be considered in the light of extensive media coverage of the tragedy where factual precision plays a crucial role: the attack has been declared the most documented event in human history. The response to the attack is therefore often linked with the recognition of 9/11 as a media incident. "People encounter trauma by being a bystander, by living near to where a catastrophe happened, or by hearing about a crisis from a friend," writes Ann Kaplan in *Trauma Culture: The Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature*, "But most people encounter trauma through the media, which is why focusing on so-called mediatized trauma is important" (2). Kaplan points out that the experience of the 9/11 attack was to a great extend dependant on its visual representation:

> The images were part of the traumatic symptom already evident in the media's constant repetition of the Towers being struck. Given trauma's peculiar visuality as a psychic disorder, this event seemed to feed trauma by being so highly visual in its happening. The images haunted one waking and dreaming. American culture was visually haunted by the repeated still unbelievable shots of a huge plane full of people plunging into a seemingly impenetrable tower, and bursting into fabulous orange flames. (13)

At the same time, the widespread coverage of the attacks caused what Sonia Baelo-Allue calls the loss of the feeling of reality, virtualization of the events. In "The Depiction of 9/11 in Literature: The Role of Images and Intermedial References" the scholar comments that:

> Many spectators watched the same loop of video footage and images over and over during the days following the attacks and used the TV screen as a protective shield against the reality they perceived. In an attempt to make sense of the unfolding trauma, and due to the ubiquity of similar disasters in U.S. cinema, many people compared the events with a Hollywood disaster movie; the suicide attackers were linked to actors in a global superproduction. Such views underlined the seemingly unreal nature of the events and the way they shattered our sense of reality. (184)

The same idea appears in Susan Sontag's study on the representation of violence in war photography, *Regarding the Pain of Others*:

> A catastrophe that is experienced will often seem eerily like its representation. The attack on the World Trade Centre on September 11 2001, was described as "unreal," "surreal," "like a movie," in many of the first hand accounts of those who escaped from the towers or watched from nearby. (After four decades of big-budget Hollywood disaster films, "It felt like a movie" seems to have displaced the way survivors of a catastrophe used to express the short-term unassimilability of what they had gone through: "It felt like a dream."). (20-21)

Media reports about the attacks even used some of the conventions typical for a fictional narrative. Andrew O'Hagan in his review of DeLillo's *Falling Man* in the *New York Review of Books* claimed that September 11 offered "a few hours when American novelists could only sit at home while journalism taught them fierce lessons in multivocality, point of view, the structure of plot, interior monologue, the pressure of history, the force of silence, and the uncanny. Actuality showed its own naked art that day" (2).

This aesthetic appreciation of the 9/11 terrorist attack was possible only through a certain detachment from the reality of violent events. Similarly to O'Hagan's ambivalent statement, a number of public accounts by eminent artists recognized the disaster as visually captivating and stunning. Many media reports paid particular attention to the visual impact of the events, to the vivid artistic descriptions of the setting: "a crystal blue bowl of morning sky" wrote *Hartford Courant*, whereas *The*

New Yorker said that it was "not just blue, but cheerful and invigorating, almost alarmingly blue" ("Blue Skies").

Reality and fiction are interconnected in the descriptions of 9/11; the juxtaposition of trauma and fantasy also forms the backbone of Foer's novel and explains the author's use of stylistic devices. In *Extremely Loud* Foer chooses to combine a naturalistic portrayal of violence with metaphoric accounts of dream-like experiences and extensive allusions to mythology.

Actual descriptions of the attack on the World Trade Center are very scarce in the novel and the narrative of violence is intentionally indirect and distorted. The only account of the burning towers is presented towards the end of the novel in the grandfather's letter to his dead son. The old man remembers watching live news about the attack:

> It wasn't until the second plane hit, and someone who didn't mean to holler hollered, that I looked up, there were hundreds of people around the televisions now, where had they come from? I stood up and looked, I didn't understand what I was seeing on the screen, was it a commercial, a new movie? . . . I tried to count the floor above where the planes had hit, the fire had to burn up through the buildings, I knew that those people couldn't be saved, and how many were on the planes, and how many were on the street, I thought and thought. (272)

The grandfather states that at the time of the attack he was in the Dresden's train station, surrounded by people oblivious to the unfolding disaster: "people were laughing, there were lines in front of the movie theatres, they were going to see comedies, the world was so big and small" (272). Foer makes the atrocity seem insignificant, trivial in the eyes of passers-by, which directs the reader's attention to the grandfather's individual and personal response to the disaster.

At the same time, Foer intentionally parallels descriptions of the attack with a violent scene from a wildlife channel:

> On my walk home I stopped in front of an electronics store, the front window was a grid of televisions, all but one of them showing the buildings, the same images over and over, as if the world itself were repeating . . . one television, off to the side, was showing a nature program, a lion was eating a flamingo, the crowd became noisy, someone who didn't mean to holler hollered, pink feathers, I looked at one of the other televisions and there was

> only one building, one hundred ceilings had become one hundred floors, which had become nothing. . . . the sky was filled with paper, pink feathers. (272)

Connecting the images of a lion killing a flamingo with the destruction of the WTC towers, Foer decentralizes the tragedy of 9/11 and asks the reader to compare the two pictures. The author not only formally provides a visual analogy for the TV image, but also puts the 9/11 events into perspective of universal violence: while both screens show some form of brutality, only people's actions are realized as inhumane, shocking and cruel.

While the imagery of the crashing planes and the burning towers is central for the plot, it is an absent presence that defines the novel without being directly represented in the narrative. The events of the attack appear in the novel only indirectly, through multiple layers of narrative: they are described by the grandfather and later, separately, by the grandmother as memories of watching a the towers burn on television (225, 272). Much like Art Spiegelman's iconic illustration for the September 21 *New Yorker* cover, featuring the black outline of the two towers against a black background, Foer uses the concept of the negative space to talk about the actual attack. The events that took place before the outset of the storyline are evoked by the protagonist's seemingly irrelevant remarks about the skyscrapers and planes:

> Sometimes I think it would be weird if there were a skyscraper that moved up and down while its elevator stayed in place. So if you wanted to go to the ninety-fifth floor, you'd just press the 95 button and the ninety-fifth floor would come to you. Also, that could be extremely useful, because if you're on the ninety-fifth floor and the plane hits below you, the building could take you to the ground, and everyone could be safe. (3)

The young boy's refusal to talk about the actual traumatic experiences and, at the same time, his obsession to find an impossible solution for the past atrocity indicate his psychological trauma. Even though Oskar attends sessions with a psychiatrist, he doesn't seem to make any progress in his psychological healing. The conversations that Dr. Fein has with the boy seem to avoid addressing the actual problem, which also gives Oskar an impression that the correct way to cope with the trauma is by burying feelings deep inside: "No matter how much I feel, I'm not going to let it out." Confesses the boy, "If I have to cry, I'm gonna cry on the inside. If I have to bleed, I'll bruise. If my heart

starts going crazy, I'm not gonna tell everyone in the world about it. It doesn't help anything. It just makes everyone's life worse" (203).

However, Oscar's inclination to suppress the bitter reality and find comfort in fantasy and imagination does not work, because he continuously encounters reminders of the distressing events, which bring forward bitter memories. This process is characteristic of the functioning of a traumatized psyche, described by Herman in *Trauma and Recovery: the Aftermath of Violence*:

> The traumatic moment becomes encoded in an abnormal form of memory, which breaks spontaneously into consciousness, both as flashbacks during waking states and as traumatic nightmares during sleep. Small, seemingly insignificant reminders can also evoke these memories, which often return with all the vividness and emotional force of the original event. Thus, even normally safe environments may come to feel dangerous, for the survivor can never be assured that she will not encounter some reminder of the trauma. (60)

Later, the actual events of the destruction of the buildings again make a brief appearance, this time through seemingly benign photographs and episodes that, at first sight, have nothing to do with the attack. When Oskar visits the Empire State Building he cannot help to imagine what it would be like if a plane were to strike the building (244-245). Similarly, the photographs of a falling cat and a descending roller-coaster cart (see fig. 4 and fig. 5) suggest the connection with the well-known image of a falling man, popularized by the media to become representative of the attack.

The images that allude to the bitter reality of the attacks but do not necessarily represent them are apparent not only in the novel itself, but also in Stephen Daldry's 2001 film *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*: the opening scene shows a man's body falling against a cyan-blue background. Although an obvious allusion to Richard Drew's photograph "The Falling Man", the slow-motion scene creates a feeling of tranquility and calmness as it is not clear whether the man is falling down or just floating in the air. The simple tune and unnatural color of the background add to the unrealistic atmosphere of the episode. The director later explained his dilemma about depicting the actual attack:

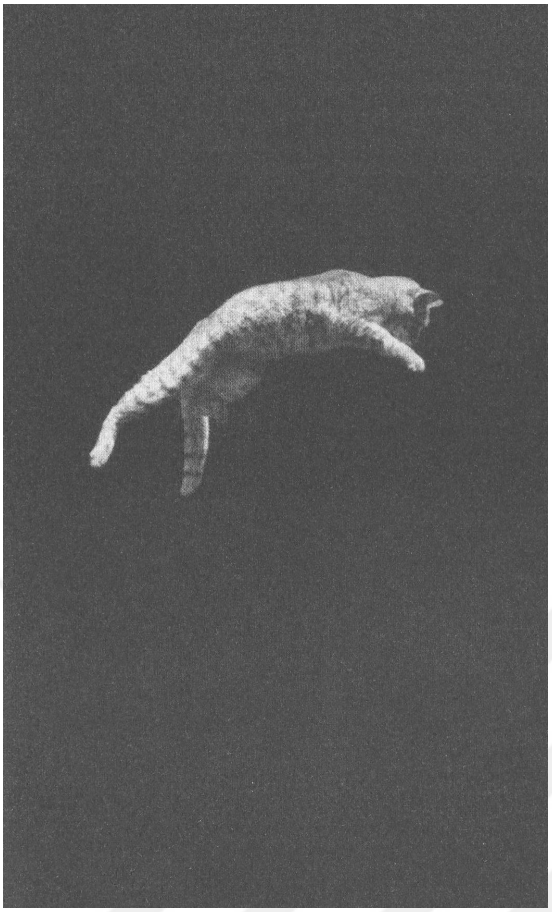


Fig. 4. Jonathan Safran Foer, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (Penguin Books, 2011), p. 191



Fig. 5. Jonathan Safran Foer, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (Penguin Books, 2011), p. 148

> I had to make a choice whether I wanted to see . . . the North Tower, and I just felt I really couldn't go there; it was just really a step too far for me. And even images, like, do I really want to see the Twin Towers? Do I really want to look at the Twin Towers burning, and in the end, the only reason you do see the Twin Towers burning is because the office, the location we were looking for Sandy [Bullock] to work in had a direct view downtown of the Twin Towers, but through this really sort of refracted old New York glass, and I thought, I can possibly bear looking at it if it's through this refracted glass. It will be too much for some people, and other people might find it difficult, but it has to be a personal response. (*IndieWire*, Dec. 20, 2011)

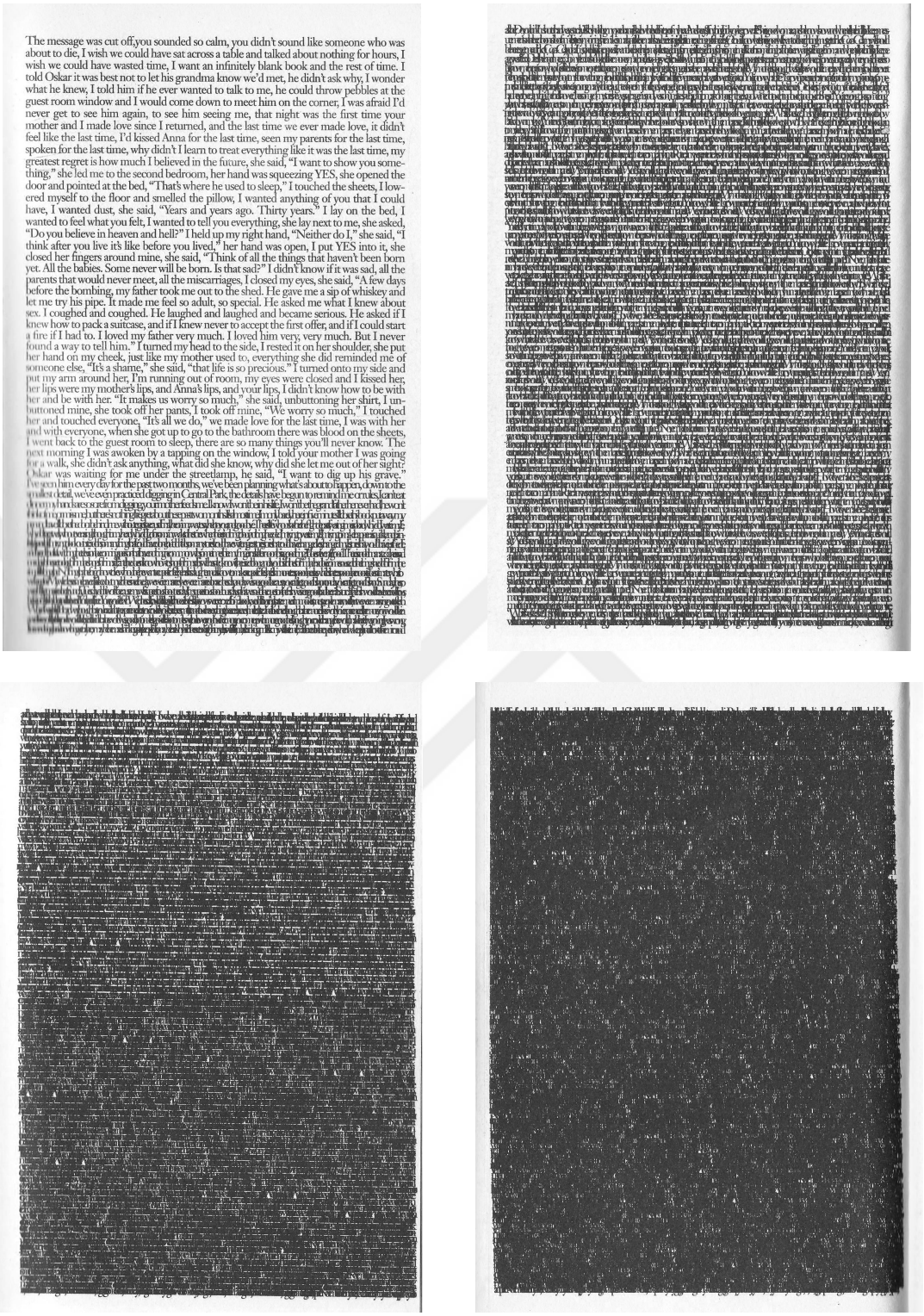
The inaccessability of one's traumatic past and difficulty in representing historical violence in the text is one of the important themes that is featured in all three Foer's novels. As discussed in the previous chapter of this thesis, in *Everything Is Illuminated*, the writer literally and typographically excludes the exact moment of the Nazi attack on

the shtetl by filling most of the page with a series of dots, until the narration continues on the next page. The theme is taken up even more prominently in *Extremely Loud*, where the novel's traumatic core literally becomes beyond verbal representation. Due to the inexpressability of the tragic past, the author presents some of the characters of the novel as mute or otherwise unable to speak of the violent experiences that defined their lives. After the Dresden bombing, where Oskar's grandfather loses his fiancée and their unborn child while himself barely escapes the massacre, the man gradually loses speech starting with the name of his beloved, Anna. Notably, the second word that he is unable to utter is "and," suggesting that the man's trauma deprives him of the ability to connect and find sequence, and the last word he loses is "I." The grandfather communicates through brief sentences in his notebook and a "yes" and "no" tattooed on the palms of his hands, which, as argued by Kristiaan Versluys, "is only one step away from total annihilation" (89). When he later tries to narrate his story in a letter to his son, he runs out of paper, so has to decrease intervals between the words to use all available space, which turns the pages completely black and indecipherable (see fig. 6).

His wife, Oskar's grandmother and Anna's sister, also attempts to describe her painful memories of the bombing and spends every spare minute of her time typing the story of her traumatic youth. However, she fails to notice that a ribbon is missing from her typewriter, so the years that she spends writing her memoir result in thousands of blank pages, also shown in the novel (see fig. 7).

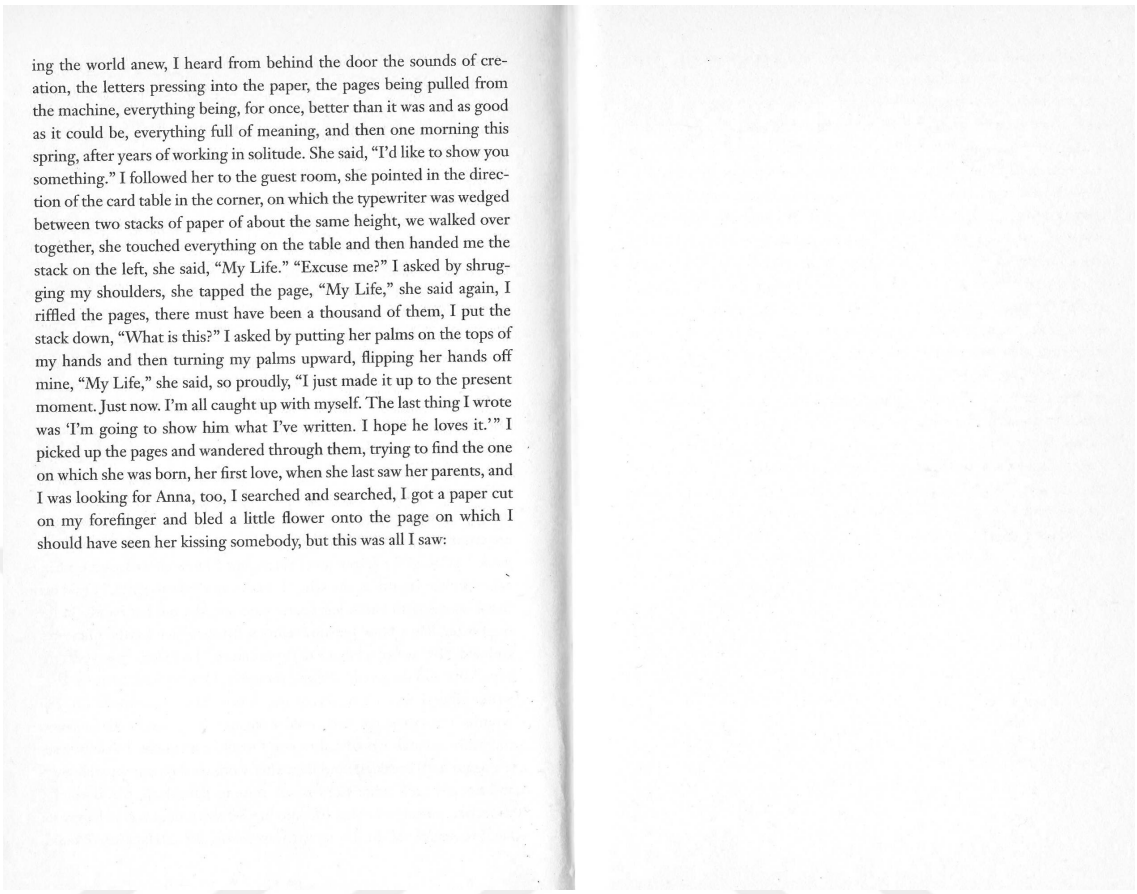
The failure of language to communicate violent experiences is, as Jenny Edkins argues in her study of cultural memory *Trauma and the Memory of Politics*, also a sign of the destruction of a community:

> The language comes from and belongs to the family and the community. . . . Communication takes place in language and language itself is social and political, not individual. . . . It has become plain to a survivor that the appearance of fixity and security produced by the social order is just that: an appearance. Of course, the language we speak is part of the social order, and when the order falls apart around our ears, so does the language. What we *can* say no longer makes sense; what we want to say, we can't. There are no words for it. This is the dilemma survivors face. (7-8)



The message was cut off,you sounded so calm, you didn't sound like someone who was about to die, I wish we could have sat across a table and talked about nothing for hours, I wish we could have wasted time, I want an infinitely blank book and the rest of time. I told Oskar it was best not to let his grandma know we'd met, he didn't ask why, I wonder what he knew, I told him if he ever wanted to talk to me, he could throw pebbles at the guest room window and I would come down to meet him on the corner, I was afraid I'd never get to see him again, to see him seeing me, that night was the first time your mother and I made love since I returned, and the last time we ever made love, it didn't feel like the last time, I'd kissed Anna for the last time, seen my parents for the last time, spoken for the last time, why didn't I learn to treat everything like it was the last time, my greatest regret is how much I believed in the future, she said, "I want to show you something," she led me to the second bedroom, her hand was squeezing YES, she opened the door and pointed at the bed, "That's where he used to sleep," I touched the sheets, I lowered myself to the floor and smelled the pillow, I wanted anything of you that I could have, I wanted dust, she said, "Years and years ago. Thirty years." I lay on the bed, I wanted to feel what you felt, I wanted to tell you everything, she lay next to me, she asked, "Do you believe in heaven and hell?" I held up my right hand, "Neither do I," she said, "I think after you live it's like before you lived," her hand was open, I put YES into it, she closed her fingers around mine, she said, "Think of all the things that haven't been born yet. All the babies. Some never will be born. Is that sad?" I didn't know if it was sad, all the parents that would never meet, all the miscarriages, I closed my eyes, she said, "A few days before the bombing, my father took me out to the shed. He gave me a sip of whiskey and let me try his pipe. It made me feel so adult, so special. He asked me what I knew about sex. I coughed and coughed. He laughed and laughed and became serious. He asked if I knew how to pack a suitcase, and if I knew never to accept the first offer, and if I could start a fire if I had to. I loved my father very much. I loved him very, very much. But I never found a way to tell him." I turned my head to the side, I rested it on her shoulder, she put her hand on my cheek, just like my mother used to, everything she did reminded me of someone else, "It's a shame," she said, "that life is so precious." I turned onto my side and put my arm around her, I'm running out of room, my eyes were closed and I kissed her, her lips were my mother's lips, and Anna's lips, and your lips, I didn't know how to be with her and be with her. "It makes us worry so much," she said, unbuttoning her shirt, I unbuttoned mine, she took off her pants, I took off mine, "We worry so much," I touched her and touched everyone, "It's all we do," we made love for the last time, I was with her and with everyone, when she got up to go to the bathroom there was blood on the sheets, I went back to the guest room to sleep, there are so many things you'll never know. The next morning I was awoken by a tapping on the window, I told your mother I was going for a walk, she didn't ask anything, what did she know, why did she let me out of her sight? Oskar was waiting for me under the streetlamp, he said, "I want to dig up his grave." I've seen him every day for the past two months, we've been planning what's about to happen, down to the smallest detail, we've even practiced digging in Central Park, the details have begun to remind me of rules, for not

Fig. 6. Jonathan Safran Foer, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (Penguin Books, 2011), pp. 281-284



ing the world anew, I heard from behind the door the sounds of creation, the letters pressing into the paper, the pages being pulled from the machine, everything being, for once, better than it was and as good as it could be, everything full of meaning, and then one morning this spring, after years of working in solitude. She said, "I'd like to show you something." I followed her to the guest room, she pointed in the direction of the card table in the corner, on which the typewriter was wedged between two stacks of paper of about the same height, we walked over together, she touched everything on the table and then handed me the stack on the left, she said, "My Life." "Excuse me?" I asked by shrugging my shoulders, she tapped the page, "My Life," she said again, I riffled the pages, there must have been a thousand of them, I put the stack down, "What is this?" I asked by putting her palms on the tops of my hands and then turning my palms upward, flipping her hands off mine, "My Life," she said, so proudly, "I just made it up to the present moment. Just now. I'm all caught up with myself. The last thing I wrote was 'I'm going to show him what I've written. I hope he loves it.'" I picked up the pages and wandered through them, trying to find the one on which she was born, her first love, when she last saw her parents, and I was looking for Anna, too, I searched and searched, I got a paper cut on my forefinger and bled a little flower onto the page on which I should have seen her kissing somebody, but this was all I saw:

Fig. 7. Jonathan Safran Foer, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (Penguin Books, 2011), pp. 120-121

Because words fail to represent the tragic past, Foer's characters seek other forms of communication to express the violence in the wake of their trauma and by doing so attempt to reestablish relationships with others. Oskar, who cannot speak about 9/11 and keeps calling it "the worst day," translates his father's final message on the answering machine into a Morse code and turns it into a bead bracelet for his mother. However, even though she intuitively understands the importance of her son's present and immediately puts it on her wrist, she fails to decipher the important message. The grandfather, after he finds out about his son's death in the terrorist attack, calls his wife from across the Atlantic but, unable to speak, breaks the words down into numbers on the phone dial: "For love I pressed "5,6,8,3," for death, "3,3,2,8,4," when the suffering is subtracted from the joy, what remains? What, I wondered, is the sum of my life?" (269). The recipient of the ciphered message is equally unable to interpret it, so the grandmother, unaware of who she is talking to, says that all she can hear is beeps and

asks the caller to hang up and try again. “Try again?” contemplates the old man, “I was trying to try again, that’s what I was doing!” (269).

Philippe Codde in “Philomela Revisited: Traumatic Iconicity In Jonathan Safran Foer’s *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close*” relates the author’s use of alternative forms of communication to the classical myth of Philomela, where the main heroine, raped and muted by her brother-in-law, transmits the testimony by weaving it into a tapestry.

> Foer did not, however, simply create a one-for-one metaphorical rewriting of the Philomela myth; instead, he consciously and wittily composed a variation on a number of the myth’s predominant motifs. The most conspicuous motif in Philomela’s story is obviously the inexpressibility of a traumatic event that one desperately tries to transmit via alternative semiotic, non-linguistic, means. In the Philomela story, art therefore makes up for the relentless but indescribable brutality encountered in real life, which is reminiscent of Foer’s surprise, expressed in an interview with Gabe Hudson, that critics found fault with his adoption of 9/11 as a literary subject, “as if creating art out of tragedy weren’t an inherently good thing?” (247)

Codde argues, that precisely because words fail to express traumatic experiences, Foer seeks other forms of representation and therefore employs visual language to reproduce the violence that dominates the characters’ memory. This explains the author’s extensive use of illustrations in the text—photographs, screenshots, diagrams and similar mediums. In an interview Foer states that “to speak about what happened on September 11 requires a visual language” (*Village Voice*, 22 March 2005). In another interview the writer continued, saying that

> using images makes sense for this particular book. First, because the way children see the world is that they sort of take these mental snapshots; they hoard all these images that they remember 20 or 40 years later. And also, . . . when we think of [the September 11] events, we remember certain images: planes going into the buildings, people falling, the towers collapsing. That’s how we experience it; that’s how we remember it. And I want to be true to that experience. . . . I think it’s very dangerous to avoid looking at war, at violence. So I really wanted to explicitly look at those things in the book, not only through the writing, which I tried to make as visual and direct as I could, but also through these images. (*BookRage*, April 2005)

In the narrative of violence, the role of visual images is very significant. Studies in clinical psychology have already defined the difficulties victims face in verbally

testifying about violent events, explaining that "the [traumatic] experience cannot be organized on a linguistic level, and this failure to arrange the memory in words and symbols leaves it to be organized on a somatosensory or iconic level" (van der Kolk and van der Hart 172). Moreover, some scholars argue that "to be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image" (Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* 4-5). Cultural critics also agree that the narrative of violence and trauma is best conveyed graphically rather than verbally, asserting that "given the 'iconic,' visual nature of traumatic memories, creating pictures may represent the most effective initial approach to these indelible images'" (qtd. in Codde 7).

In his first novel, Foer already showed how trauma is transmitted through images: the protagonist of *Everything Is Illuminated* is haunted by a photograph of a woman who assumingly helped his grandfather escape the Nazi massacre. In *Extremely Loud*, this idea is singled out into a separate theme: the text of the novel graphically reproduces images that characterize the nine-year-old protagonist's trauma of losing his father in a terrorist attack. Oskar keeps a visual diary called "Stuff That Happened to Me" where he collects documents about his daily experiences and expresses what he cannot put into words. The images that are included in the novel derive from various media and include photographs, several sheets with colored signatures of strangers from a stationary shop (45-49), a design for a paper plane he used to make together with his father (56), a sheet with Oskar's fingerprints his mother made him submit for security reasons (65), several photographs of doorknobs and keys, mating turtles (57), a tennis player (64) etc. Moreover, Oskar also mentions several photographs that do not appear in the novel, namely, "a shark attacking a girl, someone walking on a tightrope between the Twin Towers, that actress getting a blowjob from her normal boyfriend, a soldier getting his head cut off in Iraq, the place on the wall where a famous stolen painting used to hang" (42). The boy keeps his "scrapbook of everything that happened" (42) in a tight space between his bed and the wall and takes the book out when he feels particularly down (what he calls "having heavy boots") or has difficulty falling asleep.

On the one hand, these images could be considered the author's illustration for the adjacent verbal narrative because they stand in direct relation to the text of the novel. For example, when Oskar visits Coney Island and takes a roller coaster ride with one of

the Blacks, a picture of a roller coaster appears on one of the next pages (148). Similarly, a picture of a falling cat accompanies the passage when the protagonist explains "how cats reach terminal velocity by making themselves into little parachutes" (191).

Foer, however, implies that these illustrations are mental images, included into the text to demonstrate the operation of the boy's mind. This explains, among others, foreshadowing and flashbacks created through the separation of verbal and visual narrative: for example, an aerial photograph of Manhattan with an empty white space marking the territory of Central Park (60-61) is explained much later in a chapter that contains a bedtime story titled "The Sixth Borough" told by Oskar's father (217-223). Likewise, there is no direct explanation for the photograph of a tennis player lying on his back (64), except for a reference to a similar picture in a newspaper that Oskar's father had been reading on the evening before he died (13). The reader is asked to reestablish connections between the plot and the illustrations and derive the meaning of the images.

The collection of photos included in Oskar's diary is therefore the only actual depiction of the violence of "the worst day" that appears in the novel. Whether direct visual references to the attack on the World Trade Center (such as the photo of a falling man that is reprinted throughout the book) or allusions to the boy's terrors that appeared as a result of his trauma (a blurred photograph of an observation deck at the Empire State Building and a photo of the 59th Street Bridge cabling), they provide an impression of sharing with the protagonist the nightmares of the attack (see fig. 8, fig. 9 and fig. 10).

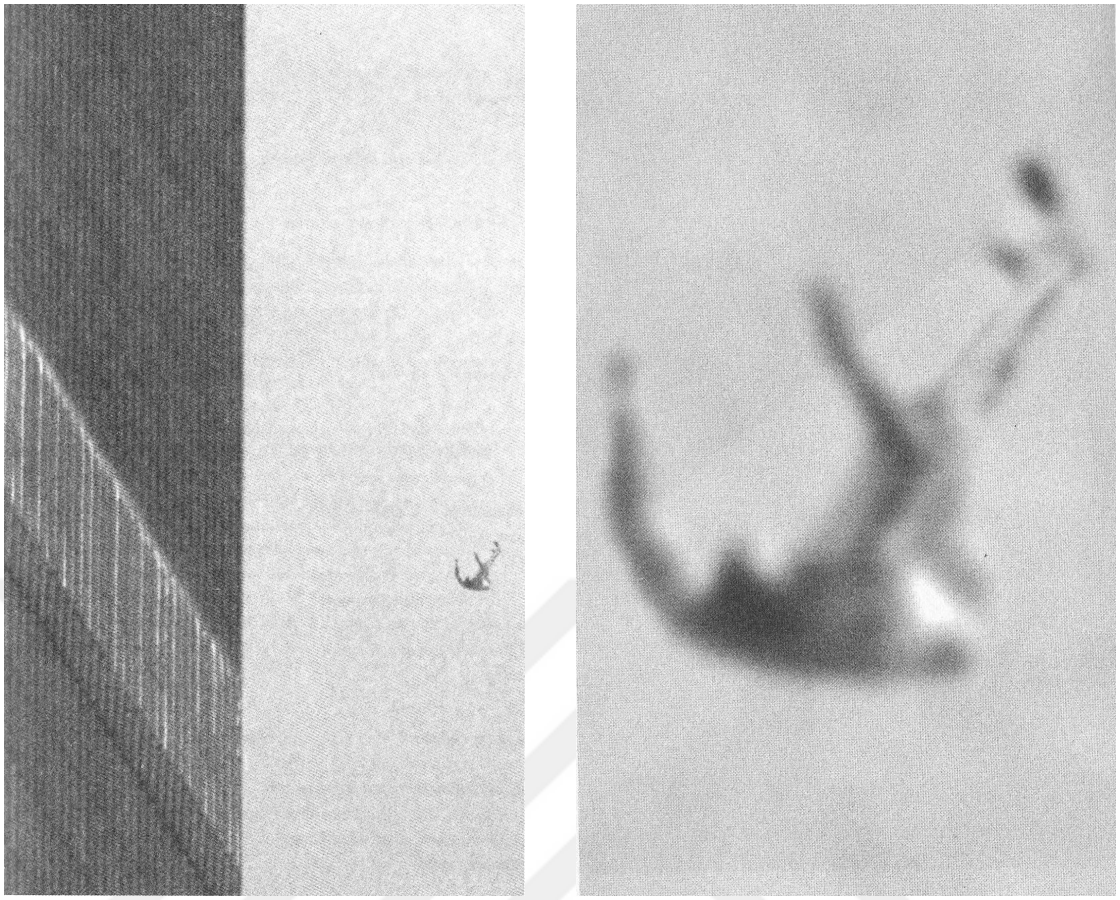


Fig. 8. Jonathan Safran Foer, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (Penguin Books, 2011), pp. 205, 62



Fig. 9. Jonathan Safran Foer, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (Penguin Books, 2011), p. 246

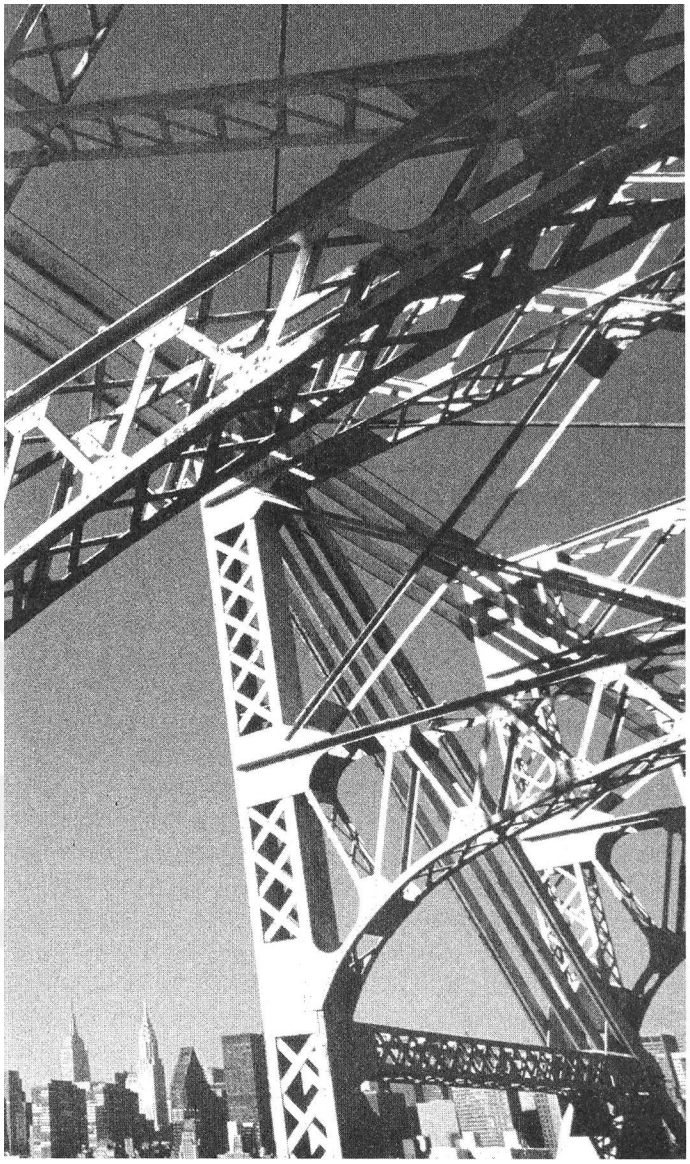


Fig. 10. Jonathan Safran Foer, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (Penguin Books, 2011), p. 89

The series of photographs represent “the unspeakable” for Oskar and become the boy’s medium to relive and reenact the past through flashbacks, nightmares, and compulsively repeated images. As Elisabeth Siegel explains in her study of traumatic memory, “they generate an immediacy that brings the characters’ experiences ‘incredibly close’ to readers. . . . The immediacy generated by these images seems to cater to a voyeuristic curiosity and desire for direct witnessing, an aspect not unimportant with regard to the visual representation of 9/11” (Siegel).

Besides providing the reader with the feeling of proximity to the characters' experiences, the images also contribute to the realistic storytelling of the novel. Due to the documentary style of most shots (such as the photo on page 241 showing a TV screen with CNN broadcasting of the news about deaths after a ferry hit a pier on Staten Island), these photographs aim to transcend the idea of artistic illustrations and provide unmediated evidence of the experience. Understandably, though, excessive visuality of such images can sometimes be accused of senseless exploitation of trauma. Foer describes the audience's negative response to graphic testimonies in an episode when Oskar plays an excerpt from an interview with a survivor of the Hiroshima bombing in front of his class. Both his teacher and classmates are shocked by the horrifying account and direct their repulsion against Oskar.

> The girls were crying, and the boys were making funny barfing noises. "Well," Mr. Keegan said, wiping his forehead with a handkerchief as he stood up from his chair, "Oskar has certainly given us a lot to think about." I said, "I'm not done." He said, "That seemed pretty complete to me." . . . Jimmy Snyder raised his hand. I called to him. He asked, "Why are you so weird?" . . . Some of the kids cracked up. I knew they were cracking up in a bad way, which is at me, but I tried to maintain my confidence. (189)

Such response to uncensored descriptions of violence is discussed in Susan Sontag's study *Regarding The Pain Of Others*, where she argues that vivid images of brutality tend to destroy what identifies people as individuals: "photographs objectify: they turn an event or a person into something that can be possessed" (81). The idea can also be illustrated by the sharp criticism of Richard Drew's notorious 9/11 photograph "The Falling Man," which appears in Foer's novel: the image was blamed for "stripping [the man] of his dignity" (qtd. in Junod). Foer, however, in his attempt to personalize mass violence and convey individual's response to real-life horrors, applies photographs to provide subjective stories of otherwise formal and detached accounts of historical violence.

The author's choice of violent historical events is guided by the same idea and is meant to reveal the hypocrisy in representations of well-known historical brutality. Both the Dresden firebombing and the nuclear destruction of Hiroshima were justified by the perpetrators as tragic war necessities. Even though the estimated death toll in each calamity is tens of thousands of civilian casualties, from the perspective of twenty-first

century Americans, these victims appear remote and impersonal—or, using Sontag's term, "exotic." "The ubiquity of . . . those horrors," says the critic, "cannot help but nourish belief in the inevitability of tragedy" (70). By explicit graphic descriptions of the effects of the nuclear explosion and the firebombing, Foer gives face to those victims, creates what Giroux calls the symbolic representation of violence, and "gives meaning and import to . . . moral twitchings" (Giroux).

It is therefore logical that in the episodes of graphic violence, Foer's choice of narrative style is guided by his intention to visualize the gruesome details of the attacks and their aftermath, to ensure the reader's complete identification with victims. The interview with Tomoyasu, the mother of a Hiroshima victim, is, apparently, a part of a school project Oskar presents to his classmates. It is included in the chapter *Happiness, Happiness* and seems to startle the characters of the novel and the reader alike. Foer shows Tomoyasu's attempts to find Masako, her daughter, following the attack on Hiroshima:

> My only thought was to find my daughter. I looked outside the window and saw one of my neighbors standing almost naked. His skin was peeling off all over his body. It was hanging from his fingertips. . . . I saw a young girl coming toward me. Her skin was melting down her. It was like wax. She was muttering, "Mother. Water. Mother. Water." I thought she might be Masako. But she wasn't. I didn't give her any water. I am sorry that I didn't. But I was trying to find my Masako. (187-188)

In this passage, Foer wants to establish the reader's strong sense of sympathy for the victim. Kowalewski calls this technique realistic imagining: "an experience for a reader to imaginatively suffer" (203) together with the characters of a violent scene. The sense of danger and psychological instability is transmitted through fragmentary verbal form and fractional information, which, as the scholar explains, causes us to fill in the distressing details that have been omitted by the narrator: "The more the descriptive omissions here pose a resistance to our reading efforts, the harder we work to overcome them, to fill the imagistic gaps and visually translate or "rephrase" the sequence. We are invited by this kind of writing to move away from words and into imagined experience" (152).

The same argument about the distorted flow of first-hand testimonies appears in Slavoy Žižek's monograph *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections*, where the critic discusses the criteria for the narrative of violence and trauma.

> There is a sense in which a cold analysis of violence somehow reproduces and participates in its horror. A distinction needs to be made between (factual) truth and truthfulness: what renders a report of any narrative of trauma truthful is its very factual unreliability, its confusion, its inconsistency. . . . The very factual deficiencies of the traumatized subject's report on her experience bear witness to the truthfulness of her report. The same holds, of course, for the unreliability of the verbal reports: the witness able to offer a clear narrative of his experience would disqualify himself by virtue of that clarity. (4)

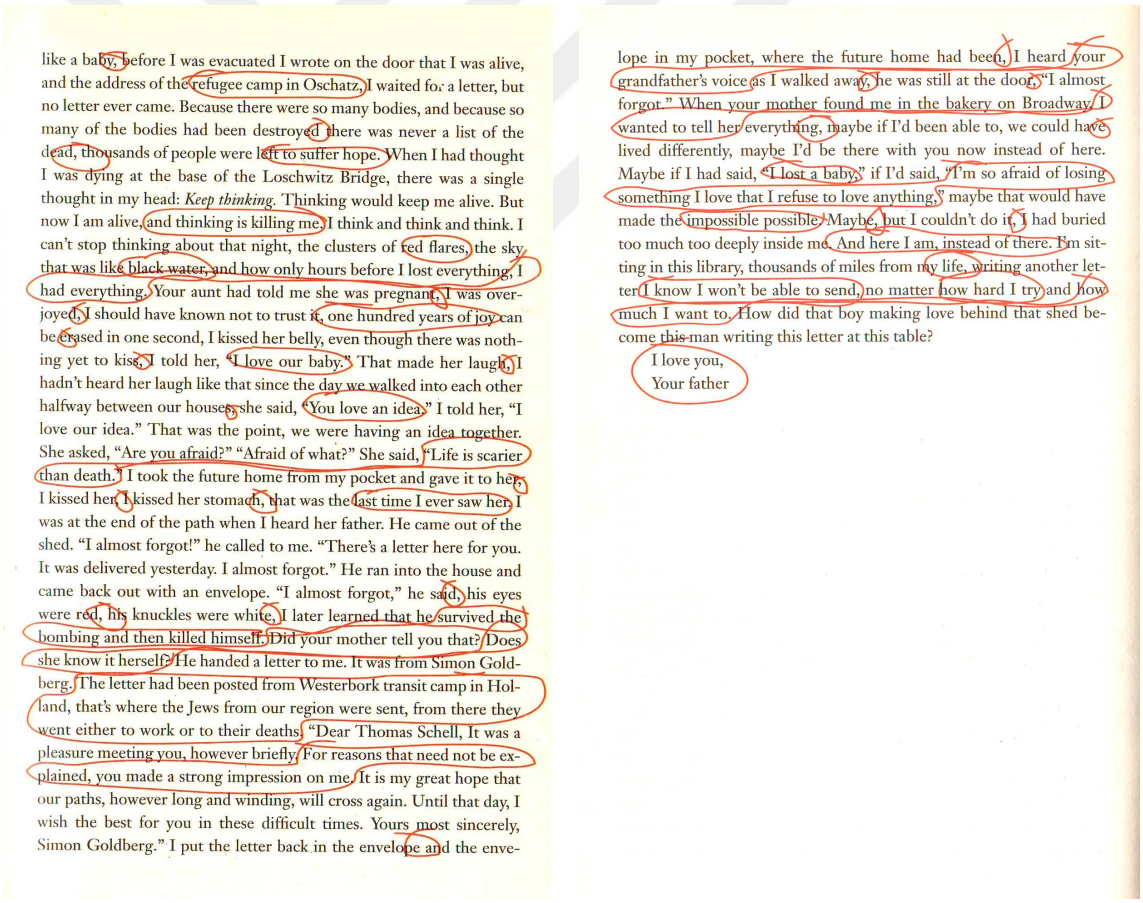
This argument is relevant within the "notion of the transmissibility" of trauma, discussed by Alan Gibbs in *Contemporary American Trauma Narratives*. The scholar claims that there is a demand for writers "to transmit rather than represent" trauma and, "as readers of trauma texts we desire affect and emotional response" (28). This constitutes the mechanism of the reader's reception of the representations of violence in Foer's *Extremely Loud.* For example, in the scene of the Dresden bombing, which appears in the grandfather's letter to his son, Oskar's father, the author provides seemingly erratic descriptions of massive destruction and people's agony:

> There was a silver explosion, all of us tried to leave the cellar at once, dead and dying people were trampled, I walked over an old man, I walked over children, everyone was losing everyone, the bombs were like waterfall, I ran through the streets, from cellar to cellar, and saw terrible things: legs and necks, I saw a woman whose blond hair and green dress were on fire, running with a silent baby in her arms, I saw humans melted into thick pools of liquid, three or four feet deep in places, I saw bodies crackling like embers, laughing, and the remains of masses of people who had tried to escape the firestorm by jumping head first into the lakes and ponds, the parts of their bodies that were submerged in the water were still intact, while the parts that protruded above water were charred beyond recognition, the bombs kept falling, purple, orange and white, I kept running, my hands kept bleeding, through the sounds of collapsing buildings I heard the roar of that baby's silence. (212-213)

What makes the scene particularly disquieting is the sensory power of the passage. Simple sentences with repetitive structure and limited descriptive details as well as references to easily recognizable objects ensure that the reader visualizes the text and experiences the events alongside the witness's narrative. "Nothing could be more

terrifying because nothing could be more simply put. . . . The simpler the language, the more powerful the evocative sense that blossoms behind it. The narrower the grammatical neck of the bottle, the more effective the genii it emits" (Kowalewsky 55).

That is why, the red markings that Foer typographically adds to correct errors in grammar and punctuation (see fig. 11), are intended to strike the reader as judgmental and inappropriate. They play, however, an important part in the plot: it was mentioned earlier in the novel that Oskar's father had a habit of carrying a red pen to mark mistakes that he found in *The New York Times* magazine, which also made Oskar particularly proud of his father. So, although the letter is finished with the claim that it will never be sent, the markings on its text allow the reader to understand that this was the only letter that reached its addressee.



like a baby, before I was evacuated I wrote on the door that I was alive, and the address of the refugee camp in Oschatz. I waited for a letter, but no letter ever came. Because there were so many bodies, and because so many of the bodies had been destroyed there was never a list of the dead, thousands of people were left to suffer hope. When I had thought I was dying at the base of the Loschwitz Bridge, there was a single thought in my head: *Keep thinking*. Thinking would keep me alive. But now I am alive, and thinking is killing me. I think and think and think. I can't stop thinking about that night, the clusters of red flares, the sky that was like black water, and how only hours before I lost everything, I had everything. Your aunt had told me she was pregnant, I was overjoyed, I should have known not to trust it, one hundred years of joy can be erased in one second, I kissed her belly, even though there was nothing yet to kiss, I told her, "I love our baby." That made her laugh, I hadn't heard her laugh like that since the day we walked into each other halfway between our houses, she said, "You love an idea." I told her, "I love our idea." That was the point, we were having an idea together. She asked, "Are you afraid?" "Afraid of what?" She said, "Life is scarier than death." I took the future home from my pocket and gave it to her, I kissed her, I kissed her stomach, that was the last time I ever saw her, I was at the end of the path when I heard her father. He came out of the shed. "I almost forgot!" he called to me. "There's a letter here for you. It was delivered yesterday. I almost forgot." He ran into the house and came back out with an envelope. "I almost forgot," he said, his eyes were red, his knuckles were white. I later learned that he survived the bombing and then killed himself. Did your mother tell you that? Does she know it herself? He handed a letter to me. It was from Simon Goldberg. The letter had been posted from Westerbork transit camp in Holland, that's where the Jews from our region were sent, from there they went either to work or to their deaths. "Dear Thomas Schell, It was a pleasure meeting you, however briefly. For reasons that need not be explained, you made a strong impression on me. It is my great hope that our paths, however long and winding, will cross again. Until that day, I wish the best for you in these difficult times. Yours most sincerely, Simon Goldberg." I put the letter back in the envelope and the envelope in my pocket, where the future home had been, I heard your grandfather's voice as I walked away, he was still at the door, "I almost forgot." When your mother found me in the bakery on Broadway I wanted to tell her everything, maybe if I'd been able to, we could have lived differently, maybe I'd be there with you now instead of here. Maybe if I had said, "I lost a baby," if I'd said, "I'm so afraid of losing something I love that I refuse to love anything," maybe that would have made the impossible possible. Maybe, but I couldn't do it, I had buried too much too deeply inside me. And here I am, instead of there. I'm sitting in this library, thousands of miles from my life, writing another letter I know I won't be able to send, no matter how hard I try and how much I want to. How did that boy making love behind that shed become this man writing this letter at this table?

I love you,
Your father

Fig. 11. Jonathan Safran Foer, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (Penguin Books, 2011), pp. 215-216

The father's attention to syntax and language use (including his underlining of the opening phrase "To my son" and the closing "I love you, Your father") shows his distancing from the narrative and refusal to empathize with his father's trauma. In the novel that concentrates on different manifestations of violence, this is yet another example of an individual's emotional distress.

Through the episodes of the Dresden and Hiroshima massacres, the two separate narratives of first-hand exposure to historical mass violence, Foer alludes to the reader's moral judgment of subjective experiences in such horrifying atrocities. Even though there are no actual historic details about either event (the narrators give no clues of either time or context of the two bloodsheds), the author uses the scenes as a collective image for people's suffering and terror during the times of violent attacks. In this sense, in *Extremely Loud* both descriptions are symbolic representations of the 9/11 narrative and contribute to the realistic and graphic account of the terrorist attack on The World Trade Center.

This is the mechanism behind Foer's panorama of historical violence: the lack of or rather the omission of factual information and the focus on the traumatic experiences of individual victims allows the author to blend the three historic events into one narrative of violence, always unjust, unexpected and brutal. Mandel emphasizes that "in the context of violence, fiction must be true to the facts in order to safeguard the reality of violence . . . and protect history from denial" (240). The critic then explains that fiction's fidelity to historical violence should proclaim itself "if not in the facts, then in the manifestations of their psychic impact" (242). Symbolically, this idea is echoed in the image of the rock collection, which Oskar finds at his neighbor's home, a retired journalist Alex Black. Each rock comes from a place notorious for violent events that took place there: the landing operation of the Allied invasion of Normandy on June 19, 1944, the attack on Hwach'on Dam during the Korean War and the assassination of John F. Kennedy in Dallas.

> One fascinating thing was that each rock had a little piece of paper next to it that said where the rock came from, and when it came from, like, "Normandy, 6/19/44," "Hwach'on Dam, 4/09/51," and "Dallas, 11/22/63." That was so fascinating, but one weird thing was that there were lots of bullets on the mantel, too, and they didn't have little pieces of paper next to

> them. I asked him how he knew which was which. “A bullet’s a bullet’s a bullet!” (156)

Paraphrasing Gertrude Stein’s famous sentence “Rose is a rose is a rose is a rose,” Foer asserts his ethical position by universalizing evil, proving that it is pointless and impermissible to divide violence into greater and lesser. Presenting multiple catastrophes allows him to consider 9/11 through a wider narrative frame and, thus, to ask the reader to see the suffering of innocent people for what it is: unacceptable.

As Foer extends the temporal and spatial perspective of a particular catastrophe, he also allows for a better recognition of the historical event and, therefore, for more effective mourning of the tragic incident. The author shows the process of coping with the trauma by contrasting active adaptation and escapism. Oskar’s symbolic quest, as the boy attempts to come to terms with his father’s death, and his grandfather’s metaphorical and literal escape (as well as the grandmother’s silence) are meant to be read alongside each other as two distinctly different responses to trauma.

The lives of Oskar’s grandparents are dominated by their memories of the Dresden bombing and by the trauma of the loss of their families. The grandfather fantasizes: “It’s a shame that we have to live, but it’s a tragedy that we have to live only one life, because if I’d had two lives, I would have spent one of them . . . among the living” (133). In her study, Herman makes a similar observation, noting that “traumatized people feel that they belong more to the dead than to the living” (*Trauma and Recovery* 6). Cathy Caruth makes a similar observation and notes that in the victims’ consciousness violence is an ongoing process, not a singular event.

That is the reason why the grandfather in *Extremely Loud* is unable to comprehend that almost six decades separate him from the bombing that took lives of his loved ones. “The Grandfather,” writes Catlin “is a remarkable character who embodies a deeply traumatized, and now largely lost, generation of those who suffered unimaginably in the war” (15). He still exists under the influence of his trauma, so when he writes a letter about the carnage in Dresden to his grown-up son he simultaneously addresses it to his first child: “I looked for my parents and for Anna and for you” (214) writes the old man, where “you” obviously refers to his unborn baby that died during the bombing. In the text the pronoun is circled in red, suggesting that Oskar’s father noticed the mistake and

didn't want to forgive it. Foer's narrative here parallels the final scene in Spiegelman's *Maus II*, where Vladek, finishing his testimony of the horrors of Auschwitz, calls his grown-up son by the name of his dead little brother who perished in the Holocaust. Both authors emphasize the characters' disorientedness in time, typical of a traumatized mind, and confusion between the living and those who died during the war. This, again, represents a response to traumatic memories, which Caruth explained as "repression" or "belatedness": "trauma is always characterized by a temporary permanent latency, a period of amnesia, during which the source of the originating trauma is unavailable to the sufferer's memory" (qtd. in Gibbs 10). Traumas represent "the rupture of the web of meaning, the break of order and continuity" (113) writes Giesen. Because trauma cannot be integrated into the victim's timespan, "it is a blockage, a bit monstrous, unformed, confusing, confounding, and the traumatic memory persists in a half-life, rather like a ghost. A haunting absent presence of another time in our life" (Luckhurst 81).

The grandfather makes an attempt to break free from the past when together with Oskar, he excavates his son's empty coffin and, before burying it again, fills it with unsent letters to his son. However, he realizes that "just because you bury something, you don't really bury it" (300). The old man doesn't find relief and chooses to leave everything that in his own words "is killing him": his wife who reminds him of the diseased fiancée, his grandson who reminds him of his dead son, and New York, where he found only sorrow. At the end of the novel, Foer takes his character to the airport, "not coming or going. Not something or nothing. Not yes or no" (312).

Oskar is also initially overwhelmed by this traumatized psyche: he starts his quest around New York City as a way to stay close to his father a little longer. At the beginning, he feels constantly threatened by the world around him and wants to "zip up the sleeping bag of [him]self" (6).

> Even after a year, I still had an extremely difficult time doing certain things, like taking showers, for some reason, and getting into elevators, obviously. There was a lot of stuff that made me panicky, like suspension bridges, germs, airplanes, fireworks, Arab people on the subway (even though I'm not racist), Arab people in restaurants and coffee shops and other public places, scaffolding, sewers and subway gates, bags without owners, shoes, people with mustaches, smoke, knots, tall buildings, turbans. A lot of time

> I'd get that feeling like I was in the middle of a huge black ocean, or in deep space, but not in the fascinating way. (36)

Oskar compares every event with his own traumatic experience of "the worst day," and discards anyone's attempts to help him: "Your dad didn't die, so I won't be able to explain it to you" (50) he says to a stranger at a stationary shop. At the outset of his quest, the boy's strategy of coping with the trauma is escape into fantasy, which is a similar approach to that of his grandparents. He starts "inventing things" (36), like extremely long limousines that "wouldn't need drivers. You could just get in the back seat, walk through the limousine, and then get off the front seat, which would be where you wanted to go" (5), or a teakettle with a "spout [that] opened and closed when the steam came out, so it would become a mouth, and it could whistle pretty melodies, or do Shakespeare, or just crack up," or "little microphones [that] played the sounds of our heart through little speakers" (1).

However, as Oskar's mind is burdened by the constant feeling of imminent doom, his day-dreams almost entirely circle around ideas of suffering and death. In his mind Oskar designs skyscrapers for dead people that would be built down "underneath the skyscrapers for living people that are built up," and "a whole dead world [that] could be underneath the living one" (3).

The desperation and anger, which Oskar is unable to process, find their outcome in the violence which the boy inflicts upon himself and those closest to him. When he feels at a loss or just sad, Oskar gives himself bruises, which, although not intended to be seen by anyone, function as a symptom and narrative[13] of his trauma and reveal his pain and suffering:

> I counted them last night in the mirror and there were forty-one. Some of them have gotten big, but most of them are small. I don't put them there for [mother], but still I want her to ask me how I got them (even though she probably knows), and to feel sorry for me (because she should realize how hard things are for me), and to promise me that she won't die and leave me alone. (173)

[13] Self-harm is often viewed by clinical psychology as a meaningful practice, aimed to "retell complex stories of abuse, existential angst, trauma, and loss of self" (Gurung).

Even when Oskar feels hurt and tries to express his anger as, for example, when his neighbor, friend and companion on the quest Alex Black announces that he was no longer interested in their expedition, the boy is only able to recreate an outburst in his mind: he imagines kicking the old man's door, pushing him and shouting "It isn't fair! Fuck you!", but instead he just shakes his hand to say good-bye. The same happens when Oskar's class-mate makes fun of his grandmother during the interval of the school play: "I didn't tell him to stop" recalls Oskar later, while he vividly imagines hitting the boy in front of the audience:

> I knock a bunch of teeth into his mouth, and I think they go down his throat. There is blood everywhere, covering everything. I keep smashing the skull against his skull, which is also Ron's skull (for letting Mom get on with life) and Mom's skull (for getting on with life) and Dad's skull (for dying) and Grandma's skull (for embarrassing me so much) and Dr. Fein's skull (for asking if any good could come out of Dad's death) and the skulls of everyone else I know. The audience is applauding, all of them, because I am making so much sense. They are giving me standing ovation as I hit him again and again. (146)

Like his grandparents, Oskar is initially deprived of the ability to narrate his trauma and express his feelings. However, during his quest around the city he encounters other tragic narratives which lead him to start working through his own trauma. Visiting strangers' homes, he has to both listen to their sad personal stories and tell them his own. The necessity to narrate his trauma to those he meets allows him to move beyond it towards acceptance and healing, because, similar to the narrative of 9/11 which in Foer's novel merges with other catastrophes, Oskar's trauma becomes part of the general story of ceaseless pain and suffering. Foer symbolically describes this concept in the episode of the school play's opening night to which Oskar invites all the Blacks he met during his journey. "I saw lots of people I knew, which made me feel special. . . . A lot of the Blacks that I had met in those twelve weekends were there. . . . They must have been half the audience. But what was weird was that they didn't know what they had in common" (143).

Foer uses this scheme in all three of his novels: the author depicts horrific historic events that overwhelm the lives of the survivors and leave individuals devastated for long years afterwards. Unable to break free from the traumatic past, his characters try to find relief in the world of fantasy and imagination, whether it is a naïve and idealized

reality of a child or a long life of negation and silence. The author draws a perspective of violence through three generations and every time, while the third generation is able to face the reality and find resolution for the personal conflict, their grandparents inevitably disappear in the abyss of the past.

Notably, the grandfather repeatedly mentions that the trauma of his violent experiences destroyed his pre-war personality (thus the surname Schell that the author gives him, as he is no more than a shell of his previous self). “How did that boy making love behind that shed become this man writing this letter at this table?” (216) he wonders. When Thomas Schell comes to New York and marries the sister of his diseased fiancée, he attempts to recreate his pre-war identity, which was not yet marked by the horrors of the war. This obviously proves impossible and the man becomes aggressive towards his wife, who is unable to satisfy his need for metamorphosis (although his cruelty is psychological rather than physical).

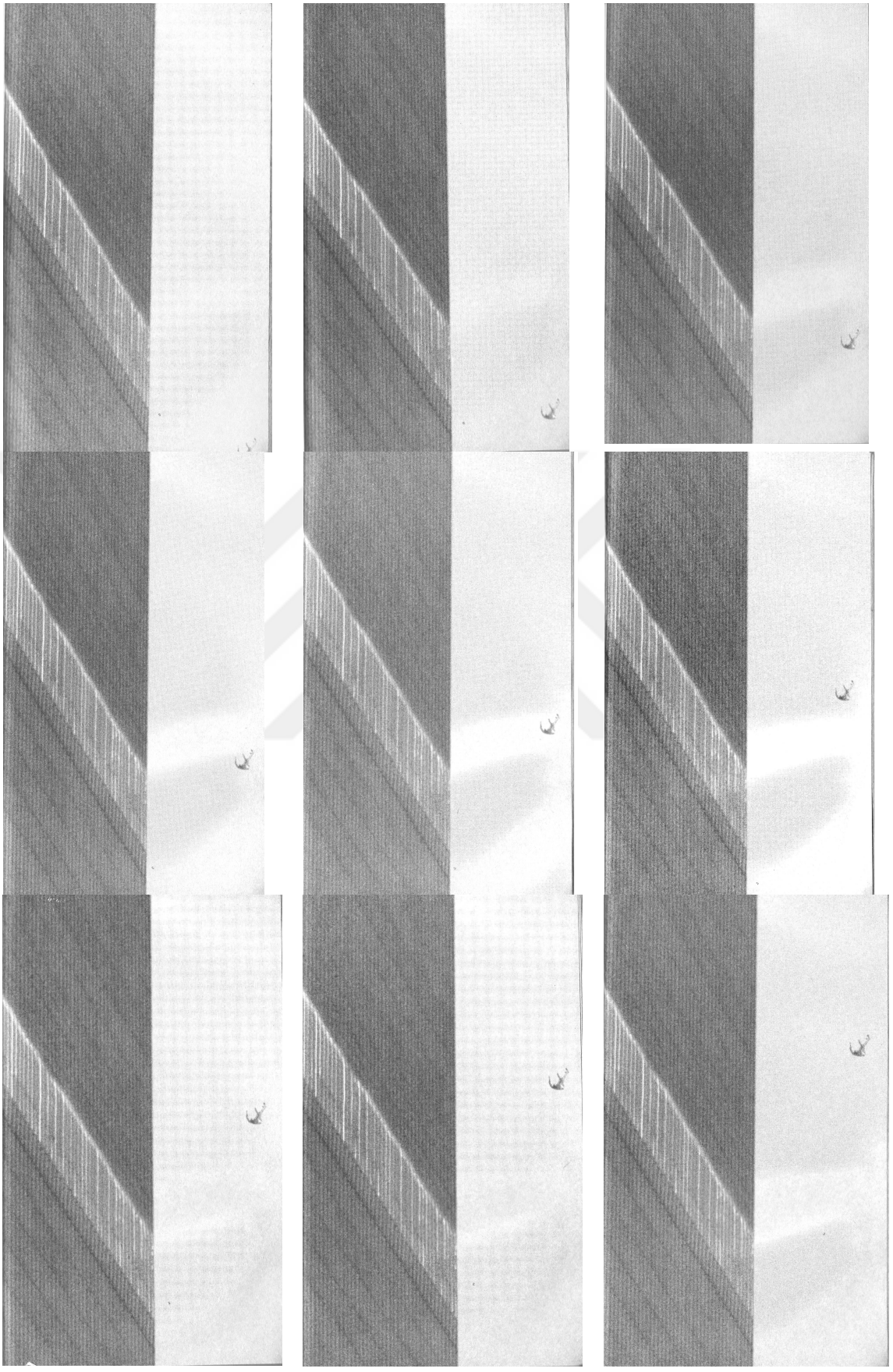
In fact, further tensions that dominate the Schell family stem from the grandfather’s metaphysical desire to separate himself from his traumatized self: his inability to provide psychological support for his wife pushes her to break her wedding promise and conceive a baby that was unwanted by her husband. He then abandons his pregnant spouse and their unborn son, which, in turn, causes his son (Oskar’s father) to seek his father. Apparently, Thomas Schell Junior attempts to resemble his own father whom he never knew by taking over the jewelry-shop, where Thomas Schell used to work. At the same time, he wishes to become what his father never was—a loving husband and a caring parent. After Thomas Schell’s death in the terrorist attack, the parallelism between the two characters becomes even more apparent. Finally, when the grandfather finds out about the death of his son, he says: “I saw it, Thomas Schell, my first thought was that I had died. ‘He leaves behind a wife and a son,’ I thought, my son” (273).

In order to allow Oskar to break free from the family’s legacy of trauma and violence and to continue his life into the future, the grandfather accepts the weight of the historical trauma and chooses to leave for the second time—he buries the unsent letters to his son, packs his suitcase and goes to the airport, where the author leaves him at the end of the book. From the entry in the grandmother’s journal, the reader finds out that she joined him at the waiting lounge: “What’s killing you? . . . He wrote, You are

killing me. And then I was silent. He wrote, You remind me. I put my hands on the table and told him, You have me" (310). Foer stresses the importance of acknowledging, or "having," the traumatic memories, but at the same time requires his characters to leave the painful past behind.

In this light, the flipbook at the end of *Extremely Loud*, with pictures of a man jumping from one of the towers, does not represent the protagonist's escape into the idealized world (which many reviewers accused Foer of depicting) but his established understanding of the difference between the life before and after exposure to extreme violence. The traumatized boy copies these images from a Portuguese website and imagines the man to be his father: "I want to stop inventing. If I could know how he died, exactly how he died, I wouldn't have to invent him dying inside an elevator that was stuck between floors . . . There were so many different ways to die, and I just need to know which was his" (257). Seeking closure, the boy insists on finding out exhaustive information about the traumatic events: "It makes me incredibly angry that people all over the world can know things that I can't," comments Oskar about his attempts to find pictures of the attack on the Internet. "Because it happened here, and happened to me, so shouldn't it be mine?" (256). He also blames his mother for what he understands as trying to escape the truth: burying an empty coffin and finding a boyfriend.

In the final pages of the novel, Oskar, however, indeed imagines time going backwards. He prints out dozens of photographs of the falling man and reverses the order of the images, so that the man appears to be flying upwards into the sky instead of falling down (see fig. 12).



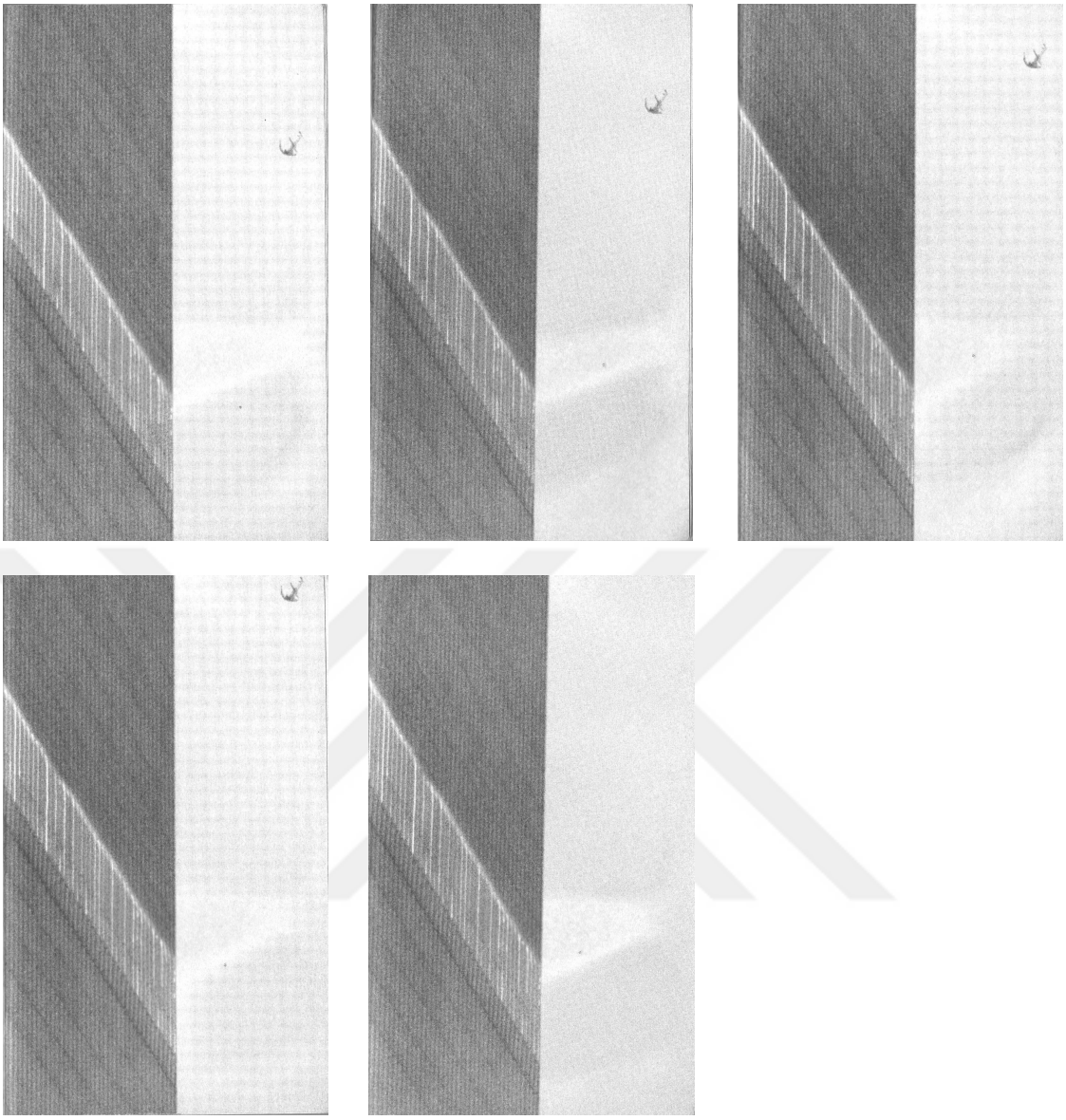


Fig. 12. Jonathan Safran Foer, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (Penguin Books, 2011), pp. 327-355

The boy comments on his flipbook in the closing section of the book:

> When I flipped through [them], it looked like the man was floating up through the sky. And if I'd had more pictures, he would've flown through the window, back into the building, and the smoke would've poured into a hole that the plane was about to come out of. Dad would've left his message backward, until the machine was empty, and the plane would've flown backward away from him, all the way to Boston . . . We would have been safe. (326)

The past conditional mood ("would have flown," "would have left," "would have been safe") of the novel's closing passage indicates that Foer doesn't try to achieve "a banal,

premature, and unrealistic closure of 9/11" (qtd. In Codde, 250) as some critics understood this section. Instead, the author stresses the impossibility of feeling safe in the world which is defined by trauma and violence. The narrative accurately although subtly illustrates the deceptiveness of the feelings of security and protectedness as in the times prior to the attack; these feelings are now manifestly unrealistic. Here, as the protagonist expresses his dream, he, at the same time, states its impossibility. When at the end of the novel Oskar notices that his scrapbook "was completely full . . . with maps, drawings, pictures from magazines and newspapers and the Internet," he says that he "was going to have to start a new volume soon" (325). Even though he completed his quest and came to the realization of the universality of violence and grief, the protagonist points out that he will have to continue to deal with the world's brutal reality.

In Daldry's film, however, this theme was completely left out and the central psychological conflict of the story finds an optimistic closure. In the film's final scenes Oskar is shown writing letters to every Black he has met during his quest. In these letters, he thanks the strangers for their assistance in his quest and explains how they unintentionally helped him cope with the loss. By spreading his story Oskar makes the tragedy of the 9/11 attacks personal for all characters either old, immigrant or very young. The trauma is therefore emotionally resolved through the society's bond in the face of the tragedy: not only has Oskar learnt to live without his father, but the other characters are also transformed through their interaction with the boy: Abby and William Black decide not to get divorced, a woman who previously shut the door in Oskar's face is shown wiping off a tear when reading his letter, Fong Black who is first described as a marginalized immigrant because of her lack of English is later shown surrounded by other Asians who are listening to her reading aloud Oskar's letter. As the Blacks' compassion and sympathy help Oskar accept the death of his father, he finally says "I thought I could never do without him, but now I know I can. I think that would do my dad proud."

Daldry's film follows the novel's pattern and concentrates on the characters' personal responses to historical trauma. However, the director almost entirely abandons the theme of mass violence and the legacy of suffering, which are central in Foer's book.

The six years, that passed between the publishing of the novel and the release of the film (and ten years that separate the film from the actual attack), allowed the trauma of September 11 to become cushioned by the optimistic promise of people's support and understanding.

Foer's aim in showing violence associated with different nations and periods, however, is meant to underline the horror of mass violence, whether happening in Japan, Vietnam, Germany or the United States. In *Extremely Loud*, the author shows problems associated with the narrative of trauma and, at the same time, insists that sharing violent experiences is essential for the victim's psychological healing. The writer continued to discuss the idea about the interrelation of different episodes of violence that otherwise seems to be separated by time and space. Similar to Foer's first and third novels, the theme of violence in *Extremely Loud* is analyzed through several generations from the same family. Again, only the youngest characters are allowed to work through the legacy of trauma while their predecessors remain trapped in the discourse of the past.

CHAPTER III

"USES OF A JEWISH FIST"[14]: VIOLENCE AND MASCULINITY IN *HERE I AM*

> A Jewish fist can do more than masturbate and hold a pen.
> Slide out the writing implement and you've got a punching implement.
> (Foer, *Here I Am* 205)

Jonathan Safran Foer's third novel, *Here I Am*, was published in 2016, which is over a decade after the previous one. Given such a long period of silence for a young author, the book had been expected with both excitement and cautiousness. Once it came out, the reviews were similarly contrasting: while, for example, Dwight Garner from *The New York Times* was ready to call it "Mr. Foer's best and most caustic novel," Dan Friedman in *The LA Review of Books* claimed that it lacked "the frightening, raw revelations" of the writer's first novels, and Alex Preston in *The Guardian* accused it of being "a surprisingly old-fashioned, realist novel of ideas, [which] sees Safran Foer moving away from the playfulness and experimentation of his earlier works."[15]

Here I Am structurally and thematically continues many of Foer's preferred themes and writing techniques, to such an extent that it appears to be a part of a trilogy united by the same characters—several generations of a middle-class intellectual Jewish family in a megalopolis on the American East Coast. In all three novels the main attention is given to the family's younger members, who have to negotiate their connection with both their family's traumatic past, and their present-day reality, which unfolds in the background of a massive cataclysm.

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[14] The title of this chapter is taken from the title of one of the eight parts of the novel.

[15] In Foer's defence, Lev Grossman notes that "there is a certain segment of New York's intensely self-fascinated literary world that loves to hate Foer: for his charmed life (cf. Princeton, Oates, etc.), his Wunderkindheit, his boyish looks, his real estate (his Park Slope townhouse was briefly on the market for $ 14 million in 2014), his fraternizing-with-celebrities, his self-seriousness." ("Jonathan Safran Foer's Family Drama," *Time*, August 23, 2016)

Similar to his first two novels, Foer uses autobiographical material for the main plotline of the book. The central character in *Here I Am* is Jacob Bloch, a television screenwriter in his early forties, who, after having won a National Jewish Book Award at the age of twenty four[16], is working on a screenplay for a show that he is not even mildly interested in: "It isn't *my* show" he replies when accused of having "passed a lot of time for a lot of grateful zombies" (199)[17]. At the same time, Jacob is secretly writing another play called *Ever-Dying People*, which is based on his family's life; however, unable to share it, the writer keeps his work locked in a desk drawer.

Jacob's wife Julia is an architect who, as it is mentioned throughout the novel, has never yet built anything. She spends most of her time looking after the family, occasionally taking projects in interior design, and imagining houses she could construct. Together with their three sons and an old family dog, the Blochs live in an elite Washington neighborhood, paying close attention to brand names that can affirm their upper middle class status, such as "Miele vacuum, Vitamix blender, Misono knives, Farrow & Ball paint," the Whole Foods market, the "teak enclosure built for their garbage bins," and "Freudian amount of sushi [intake]." Well aware of the social, cultural and ethnic requirements that public opinion has put on their family, and being proficient in fulfilling their daily needs, the Blochs appear to have lost intimacy with, and understanding for each other. As newlyweds, Jacob and Julia ritualized little romantic events, such as sunset walks, readings of poetry and love letters every Friday, and a policy of complete honesty with each other. Fifteen years into the marriage this routine seems irrelevant and unnecessary, until, finally, Julia starts sleeping in her bra "because it made her feel more supported" (113).

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[16] *Everything is Illuminated* earned Jonathan Safran Foer a National Jewish Book Award in 2001, when the author was twenty four years old.

[17] In January 2012 a number of articles appeared about a new HBO comedy called *All Talk* written and created by Jonathan Safran Foer. The show was about a Jewish family in Washington D.C., and the tone would be, according to a quote in *Deadline Hollywood*, "politically, religiously, culturally, intellectually, and sexually irreverent." Ben Stiller was to direct and star in the production, and Scott Rudin agreed to produce the show. At the last moment, however, Foer forced to stop the production. He explained his decision in a conversation with Lev Grossman: "I had a kind of nervous breakdown, almost. I don't want to do this. I don't want to be a TV writer. That's not how I want to live my life. In a way it was my return to writing. It was after that that I really went into high gear on [*Here I Am*]" (*Time*, 23 August 2016).

> The withholding of sexual needs between Jacob and Julia was the most primitive and frustrating kind of withdrawal, but hardly the most damaging. The movement towards estrangement—from each other, and from themselves—took plce in far smaller, subtler steps. They were always becoming closer in the realm of doing—coordinating the ever-expanding routines, talking and texting more (and more efficiently), cleaning together the mess made by the children they made—and farther in feeling. (39)

Jacob's and Julia's three sons—Sam, Max and Benjy—likewise become an epitome of disconnectedness. The oldest brother, Sam, is a teenager who is about to have his bar mitzvah celebration[18]. "On the verge of manhood," Sam has little contact with his parents and spends most of the time on his computer in a virtual community called Other Life. Here, he assumes the role of his avatar Samantha, a Latina girl, which he chooses only because she does not resemble him in his real life. As a teenager who feels very awkward about his new and changing body, the boy wishes to identify with a beautiful and graceful girl, dressed in revealing clothes.

> No one ever asked Sam why he took a Latina as an avatar, because no one . . . knew that he had. The choice might have seemed odd. Some might even have thought it was offensive. They would be wrong. Being Sam was odd and offensive. Having such prolific salivary and sweat glands. Being unable not to think about walking while walking. . . . He assumed that there were times, other than while masturbating, when he felt at home in his body, but he couldn't remember them. . . . Samantha wasn't his first Other Life avatar, but she was the first whose logarithmic skin fit. (64-65)

The other two boys are also in the process of claiming their independence: Max, who is a few years younger than Sam, is starting to assert privacy from his parents, while the youngest of the three, Benjy, is on the verge of physical independence. When Benjy is leaving his family home to stay overnight with his grandparents, the boy asks his father "What if I don't miss you?" (140). Both Jacob and Julia seem unprepared for the idea of losing illusory connectedness, and, trying to reassure the boy, turn their answer into a joke: "'Of course it's OK,' Julia said, giving Benjy a last kiss. 'Nothing would make me happier than for you to have so much fun you don't think about us at all.' Jacob came down the stairs to give Benjy the last, last kiss. 'And anyway,' he said, 'you'll miss us" (140).

[18] Bar mitzvah is a Jewish coming of age ritual for boys, usually held at the age of thirteen.

Given this delusion of safety and happiness, the couple's separation and subsequent divorce come as a shock for everyone in the family. The conflict is provoked by Jacob's secret cell phone, which Julia accidentally finds in a family bathroom behind a toilet, and discovers a number of sexually explicit messages between her husband and his colleague. Even though it is made clear that the adultery did not grow into anything more than the exchange of "sexts," the couple splits and Jacob moves out from the family home.

In *Here I Am,* however, Foer does not restrict the plot by focusing only on the marital crisis of one couple. If both *Everything is Illuminated* and *Extremely Loud* depicted members of just one household, the scope of familial relationships is much broader in *Here I Am*. The Bloch's saga commences in pre-war Eastern Europe, where a family with seven sons live in a Galician shtetl near the town of Drohobycz in Western Ukraine. Only two brothers, Benny and Isaac, survive the Holocaust by "hiding together in a hole for more than two hundred days, and then living in forests" (219) after their family perishes "in a burning synagogue[19]" (201). When the war is over, the brothers meet two women, also sisters, who similarly witnessed the horrors of the Nazi occupation, and the two couples get married. Then, Isaac and Sarah move to the United States, while Benny with his unnamed wife move to Israel; each couple has one son, Irv and Shlomo respectively, each of whom later also has one son. This produces two lines of descent, the American one comprising of Jacob, Julia and their three sons, and their Israeli cousins – Tamir, his wife Rivka and their children – Noam, Yael and Barak.

Jacob's parents, Irv and Deborah Bloch, also receive a detailed portrait in the novel. Irv is an outspoken Zionist blogger who takes every opportunity to express his right-wing ideas about Jewish ethnic identity and the position of Jews in the world arena. Jacob often appears overpowered by his father's rabid personality and constantly presumes that Irv sees him as an underachiever. In fact, Irv openly compares his son to his

[19] Foer returns to the story of the Nazi massacre which he used in his first novel, *Everything is Illuminated*. Through this autobiographical motif the author depicts how people perished inside synagogues that were set on fire by the Nazis, and entire villages were destroyed during the Holocaust in Eastern Europe. The author chooses historically accurate setting, as Drohobych was a sight of a World War II Jewish ghetto established by Nazi Germany in occupied Poland (now Ukraine), but the details of the massacre and his personal connection to these historic events are fictional.

nephew, Tamir, a successful Israeli businessman who comes to visit the Blochs at the same time that Julia finds out about Jacob's unfaithfulness.

In this pair of contrasting characters, Jacob and Tamir Bloch, Foer creates an opposition of two stereotypical Jewish types of personality. Tamir is an object of envy for his American cousin, because he is not only richer and more successful in his career, but also funnier in conversation and more daring in his ventures. An archetypical Trickster character, Tamir performs numerous jokes that border on being offensive, and possesses energy and vigorousness that Jacob lacks.

Such an extended account of the family's genealogy in Foer's novel resembles biblical depictions of generations from *Genesis*: "Adam begat a son in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth. . . . And Seth lived and begat Enos. . . . And Enos lived and begat Cainan" (*King James Version*, Genesis 5-3,9). The author even makes direct allusions to the Old Testament, talking about Jacob's great-grandfather in a chapter which he calls "The Bible": "GERSHOM BLUMENBERG: Long dead. Son of Anshel, father of Isaac. Grandfather of Irving. Grandson of someone whose name has been lost forever. Great Rabbi of Drohobycz" (201). This parallel between the Scripture and Blochs' genealogy not only adds value to the family's history, but also emphasizes the importance of continuity and unremitted memory within a household. Foer summarizes this idea in the symbol of a tree, where each circle of a trunk represents an event of the chronological record. The symbol appears when Jacob imagines taking a walk with his grandfather through a redwood forest:

> [Isaac] stopped at a massive overturned tree and pointed at the rings.
> "This, here, is my parents' wedding. It was an arranged marriage. It worked. And here," he said pointing at a different ring, "is where Iser fell from a tree and broke his arm. . . . And here," he said pointing at another ring, "is when I left home. With Benny. Everyone else stayed—my grandparents and parents, my other five brothers—and I wanted to stay, but Benny convinced me. He forced me. And here is when Benny and I got on different boats, one for America, one for Israel." He touched a ring and let his long fingernail slide outward toward the bark as he spoke. "This, here, is when you were born. Here you were a boy. Here you got married. Here is Sam's birth, here is Max's, here is Benjy's. And here"—he touched his fingernail to the rim of the trunk, like a record needle—"is right now. And out here"—he pointed to a spot in the air, about an inch outside the trunk—"is when you'll die, and here" – he gestured at the area slightly nearer to the trunk—"is the rest of

> your life, and here"—he pointed to just outside the trunk—"is what happens next." (490)

Even though the massacre that took the lives of Isaac's family is excluded from the chronicle, it is accounted for in the form of an "absent presence," a disaster that does not need to be verbalized in order to be understood either by Jacob or by the reader.

Similar to the plotlines of *Everything is Illuminated* and *Extremely Loud*, Foer again turns to the figure of a grandfather, who is a bearer of traumatic memory and represents the family's link to the Holocaust. In *Here I Am*, traumatic postmemory is integrated into the characters' present-day reality, it is part of their lives and a component of their identity. Foer depicts the Holocaust as a determinative factor in the timeline of the Bloch family. The son, grandson and great-grandsons of Isaac, the survivor of the Holocaust, are well aware of their connectedness to the violent history and collective memory of events that took place before their birth. Their identities are shaped by his testimonies, and their lives depend on the recognition of trauma. In fact, the novel opens with the story of Isaac Bloch, accounting for his life before, during and after the war, where the succession of events adds perspective and background to the events of the plotline.

> When the destruction of Israel commenced, Isaac Bloch was weighing whether to kill himself or move to the Jewish Home. He had lived in an apartment with books touching the ceilings, and rugs thick enough to hide dice; then in a room and a half with dirt floors; on forest floors, under unconcerned stars; under the floorboards of a Christian who, half a world and three-quarters of a century away, would have a tree planted to commemorate his righteousness; in a hole for so many days his knees would never wholly unbend; among Gypsies and partisans and half-decent Poles; in transit, refugee, and displaced persons camps; on a boat; . . . on the other side of the ocean he would never wholly cross; above half a dozen grocery stores; . . . beside a woman who rechecked the locks until she broke them; . . . and finally, for the last quarter century, in a snow-globe-quiet Silver Spring split-level. (3)

When Isaac is forced by his family to move into the Jewish Home, a senior community where he could be taken care of by professionals, he at once feels betrayed and forgotten. Isaac then commits suicide by "hanging himself with a belt wedged between his kitchen door and its frame" (489) facing the pictures of his great-grandchildren on the fridge. The bitter details of the old man's death and the graphic data from the

certificate that Jacob receives after the funeral, establish a connection between the violence of the past and the decision to end one's own life. Foer again highlights the connection between the grandfather's death and the legacy of trauma when Jacob imagines that the old man committed suicide by hanging himself from the tree of history that was described earlier: "I saw him outside, hanging by a rope from a tree" (489-490). Jacob notes that he "understood, somehow, that the weight of his [grandfather's] hanging body had pulled the tree over, making our history visible" (490).

Even though the family's lifestyle allows little possibilities to acknowledge the violence of the past, just as on the Blochs' bookshelves "Holocaust books [are hidden] behind non-Holocaust books" (202), the influence of their background on the family's present life is undeniable. Well-recognizable images evoke emotional response and "facilitate . . . the narrator's engagement with the unknowable past by framing it with the familiar" (Hunter 60). Even the most benign objects have the power to evoke painful allusions, as, for example, when Julia takes a look at a heap of coats that guests of Sam's bar mitzvah have left on a bed.

> [D]ozens of coats piled on the bed . . . looked like dead bodies, like Jewish dead. Those images had imprinted Julia's childhood, too, and she now found certain resonances impossible to escape. Those images of naked women holding their children to their chests. She hadn't seen them since she first saw them, but she never stopped seeing them. (380)

Traumatic history is transmitted unconsciously and unwillingly and becomes an inescapable reality for carriers of postmemory. "With each inhalation we take in molecules yada yada, . . . [and] our exhalations are just as certainly going to be inhaled by our great-great-great-great-great-great-great-grandchildren" (411) says Tamir, Jacob's cousin.

The constant awareness of the collective trauma, however, impairs the characters' values and understanding of reality. Tamir remembers a poem written by a boy who died in a concentration camp: "I might not be getting it exactly right, but the gist is: don't mourn for me, live for me. I'm about to get gassed, so do me a favor and have fun. . . . 'Next time you throw a ball, throw it for me'" (408). This attitude becomes a dominant point of the characters' Jewishness, not only due to the survivor's guilt which,

every time "you throw a ball [reminds] of the corpse of a kid who should have been you," but because of the alleged responsibility for the collective identity.

> Sometimes you just want to veg out in front of shitty TV, and instead you think, 'I should really go throw a ball.' . . . That throwing a ball becomes an attitude toward academic achievement, becomes measuring the distance from perfection in units of failure, becomes going to college that murdered kid would have killed to go to, becomes studying things you aren't interested in but are good and worthy and remunerative, becomes getting married Jewishly and having Jewish kids and living Jewishly in some demented effort to redeem the suffering that made your increasingly alienated life possible. (408)

Thus, Foer suggests, every action is being judged against the scale of morality and ethics within the context of the historical atrocity: the Holocaust determines the code of conduct and defines reality for the characters of *Here I Am*. Moreover, the memory of the Holocaust is only one of the multitude of violent and cruel events that guide their lives. The characters find that their reality is directed by the feelings of burden and accountability for every human tragedy that they know about. So, when Julia walks around a hardware gallery, she reflects that "it was elegant, and it was obnoxious, and in a world where the bodies of Syrian children washed up on beaches, it was unethical, or at least vulgar" (43). A similar remark is made by Jacob, when he is offered to pay for an online game: "Is it some kind of joke? Twelve hundred dollars? You realize we live in a world with starving children and cleft palates, right?" (182).

The Bloch family are overwhelmed by the feeling of guilt for their comfortable lifestyle, but choose to pursue the comfort of their American life over attempting to make any difference in the existence of those disadvantaged and underprivileged people who appear to be too far away. In the framework of Jewish American thinking, this inevitably serves as a reference to the theory of the conspiracy of silence during the Holocaust era in America, the theme of non-intervention and inactiveness in the face of massive disasters. Arthur D. Morse's *While Six Million Died: A Chronicle of American Apathy* was among the first books to approach the hypothesis that America consciously "looked the other way while Jews died in Europe" (qtd. in Lipstadt). Deborah E. Lipstadt in "Playing the Blame Game: American Jews Look Back at the Holocaust" provides a detailed study of the subject, explaining that the supporters of the conspiracy theory believe that, in the late 1930s, "there was a decided reluctance—if not outright

opposition—in government circles to speak out about the situation of the Jews and, until Kristallnacht, to . . . address their horrific conditions in the Third Reich" (Lipstadt). Jews, continues Lipstadt, found numerous obstacles blocking their way into the United States, and, while some obstacles were "generic" in that any immigrant or refugee faced them, others were rooted in an inclination by government officials to block Jews from entering the country. Other critics, among them Saul Friedman in *No Heaven for the Oppressed* and Monty Penkower in *Jews Were Expendable: Free World Diplomacy and the Holocaust*, argue that the American Jewish community carried a measure of responsibility for the fate of European Jewry: not only were they "unprepared for such an emergency" but did nothing to "wake up the world" (qtd. in Lipstadt). The main question that researchers ask is whether American Jewry had knowledge of what was happening and if they did, could they have done something in response to Nazi crimes. If they had been willing to act, claims Laurence Jarvik in his documentary *Who Shall Live and Who Shall Die?*, many of the Jews alive in 1942 could have been saved.

In *Here I Am*, Foer repeatedly acknowledges allegations of Jewish inaction and submissiveness during the Holocaust, as he does, for example, in a section describing the registration process at the airport, which apparently attempts to recreate procedures from Nazi concentration camps:

> We were given some forms to fill out, and an announcement was made that we were to pass, single file, in front of a middle-aged man in a white lab coat. He gave each person a quick visual inspection and pointed toward one of about a dozen long lines, which began to roughly correspond to age. The resonance with the selections upon entering the concentration camps was so explicit and undeniable, it was hard to imagine it wasn't intentional. (486)

Foer once again expresses these concerns when Sam together with his classmates watches a documentary about the horrors of concentration camps:

> They saw men digging their own mass graves and then kneeling in them, their fingers interlaced behind their heads. Why did they dig their own graves? If you are going to be killed anyway, why help with the killing? For the few extra moments of life? That might make sense. But how did they maintain that composure? Because they thought it might buy them a few extra moments of life? Maybe. A miniscule chance is infinitely greater than no chance, but a moment of life is an eternity. Be a good Jewish boy and dig a good Jewish grave and kneel like a mensch and, as Sam's nursery school

> teacher, Judy Shore, used to say, "You get what you get, and you don't get upset." (337-338)

Problematizing the inability of Jews to respond to extreme violence during the Holocaust points the reader's attention towards the concept of masculinity in Jewish collective consciousness and the definition of Jewish ethnic identity. Warren Rosenberg in *Legacy of Rage* remembers, how he "developed an irrational sense of shame, evoked by questions asked by friends in the street: 'Why didn't you Jews fight back?' 'Why did you let yourselves be led to the slaughter?'" Rosenberg then confesses: "I accepted their identification of me with European Jewry not with pride and a sense of moral superiority, . . . but with frustration and shame" (15). The stereotypical Jewish rejection of violence becomes equivalent to the peoples' passivity, inactiveness and inadequacy:

> Erudite, comedic, malleable, nonthreatening, part nebbish, part schlemiel, Jewish men do not fight, they talk. One might imagine a cross between Clark Kent and the early Woody Allen as the quintessential Jewish American male. . . . [W]e are "useless" and "unfit." (Rosenberg 1)

Foer explores the theme of Jewish masculinity and rejection of violence over two sets of characters: the four generations of Holocaust survivors—Isaac, Irv, Jacob and Sam, – and the contrasting pair of Jacob and Tamir—an American Jew versus an Israeli Jew. In both cases, resistance to brutality and acknowledgement of cruelty depends on the characters' proximity to witnessing firsthand traumatic reality, either the atrocities of the Holocaust or the long-lasting conflict between Israel and Palestine.

Isaac, the patriarch of the family and Jacob's grandfather, is said to be "the last Yiddish-speaker in his family, [and] the language would be in his casket, too" (347). When he moves to the United States after the war, the man attempts to cut down his emotional connection with the past: he changes his surname from Eastern-European into Anglo-Saxon and assumes the new identity of an American citizen. The man would never let his children so much as hear the language of their heritage, because in his consciousness it is a reminder of the horrors that he experienced in the Old World. Just as his knees would symbolically never wholly unbend after spending such a long time hiding in a confined space, his identity is broken by the traumatic experiences. He passes his life searching for the best deal on toilet paper even when he does not need any, and "treats buffets like grocery stores before blizzards" (348). Because of "trauma's power to

deform the mind and heart" (349), Isaac's preferred alternative is mere survival, so he raises his family with the idea of compliance to the inevitability of destiny and submission to unpleasant reality.

> If having no choice were a choice, Isaac would have run out of choices once a day after 1938. But the family needed him, especially before the family existed. They needed him to turn his back on his grandparents, his parents, and five of his brothers. They needed him to hide in that hole with Shlomo, to walk with rigid legs toward Russia, eat other people's garbage at night, hide, steal, forage. They needed him to forge documents to board the boat, and tell the right lies to the U.S. immigration officer, and work eighteen-hour days to keep the grocery profitable. (347)

At Isaac's funeral, a young rabbi draws a parallel between Isaac's lifestyle and victimization, which he understands as a distinctive feature of Jewish collective identity and a result of the continuous influence of traumatic memory:

> If you were to ask one hundred Jews what was the Jewish book of the century, you would get one answer: *The Diary of Anne Frank*. If you were to ask what was the Jewish work of art of the century, you would get the same answer. This despite it having been created neither as a book nor as a work of art, and not in the century in which the question was asked. But its appeal—symbolically, and in its own terms—is overpowering. . . . But is it good for us? Has it been good to align ourselves with poignancy over rigor, with hiding over seeking, victimization over will? No one could blame Anne Frank for dying, but we could blame ourselves for telling her story as our own. Our stories are so fundamental to us that it's easy to forget that we choose them. (349)

The rabbi then connects Jewish victimhood with the metaphor of a baby that is crying silently therefore cannot be heard: when Moses is hidden by his mother in a reed basket and released into the current of the Nile, he is found by Pharaoh's daughter. "'Look!' she says. 'A crying Hebrew baby.' But how did she know that he was a Hebrew? . . . Wouldn't she have *heard* him crying? That's how it works. You hear them crying and you go to them. . . . She *saw* that he was crying, but didn't *hear*. . . . She knew he was a Hebrew because only Jews cry silently" (351-352).

Irv Bloch, who is Isaac's son and a second generation survivor, has a different response to violence and historical trauma than his father. "I'm not always right," he tells Jacob. "But I'm always strong. And if our history has taught us anything, it's that it is more important to be strong than right" (204). He symbolically "escapes the baldness that

ravaged [his father's] head" (196) and substitutes the victimized viewpoint, that he inherited from Isaac, with American rigor and vitality. He despises his family's history because, in his mind, it stands for the Jewish legacy of submission and surrender: "How much greater the Jewish people might be today if instead of *not dying*, our ambition was *living righteously*. If instead of 'It was done to me,' our mantra was 'I did it'" (350). Irv substitutes the Jewish algorithm of suffering with the ideology of potential, promise and possibility, characteristic of the American myth of the Promised Land. In the United States, he is the first generation who feels comfortable as an American: "Irv learnt the infield fly rule, learned the alphabetic/syllabic logic of D.C. street naming, learnt to be ashamed of his house's look and smell" (219-220).

Irv, however, does not altogether refuse his ethnic identity. He believes that Jews have enemies everywhere and "the world will always hate Jews" (194): "the world population of Jews falls within the margin of error of the Chinese census, and everyone hates us" (193) repeats Irv again and again. That is why instead of trying to deny anti-Semitism, the Jews have to fight against it. That is why he urges Jacob to follow his instincts and, instead of spending time for a prime-time television show, "write something that matters." "We don't need another Einstein. We need a Koufax who pitches at the head" (205). Irv believes that the "Jewish fist can do more than masturbate and hold a pen. Slide out the writing implement and you've got a punching implement" (205).

For Irv's son, Jacob, however, the connection between violence and existential aliveness is not so straightforward. He is the grandson of a Holocaust survivor and, as a representative of the third generation, his connection to the suffering of Jews during the Holocaust is weakened by the comfort and security of his family's assimilation in the United States. He is a quintessential "Nice Jewish Boy," and Foer describes him as "miserable at sports, but great at fantasy sports. They avoided fights, but sought arguments. They were the children and grandchildren of immigrants, of survivors. They were defined by, and proud of, their flagrant weakness" (244). Philip Roth in *Patrimony* defines this psychology as the nature of Jewish temper:

> We are the sons appalled by violence, with no capacity for inflicting physical pain, useless at beating and clubbing, unfit to pulverize even the

> most deserving enemy, though not necessarily without turbulence, temper, even ferocity. We have teeth as the cannibals do, but they are there, embedded in our jaws, the better to help us articulate. When we lay waste, when we efface, it isn't with raging fists or ruthless schemes or insane sprawling violence but with our words, our brains, with mentality. (qtd. in Rosenberg 1)

Warren Rosenberg in *International Encyclopedia of Men and Masculinities* argues that this stereotype of a typical Jewish male, which originated after the destruction of the Temple and continued until the founding of the State of Israel, appeared as a counter-image for the hegemonic ideal of the warrior, popular in the Western cultures:

> With no nation-state to defend, the ideal Jewish male became a biblical scholar, a congregant, and a loving husband and father who rejected violence. As Jews were subject to anti-Semitic attacks and expulsions throughout the Diasporic period, a code of *meschlichkeit* evolved that located Jewish superiority in the refusal to share the aggressive values of their oppressors. (350)

However, in the light of historical collective trauma, such qualities are transformed into accusations of passivity and victimhood as an attribute of the Jewish ethnic identity. Brett Ashley Kaplan in *Jewish Anxiety and the Novels of Philip Roth* explains that "Jewish anxiety is a doubled anxiety around past and future victimization as well as a phobia about becoming the very thing one has been historically conditioned to loath most, that is a perpetrator" (4). That is why in Jewish American fiction violence becomes a means of self-exploration, a way to understand the limits of personal abilities, the characters' desire to establish connections with time and place[20]. In *Here I Am*, Jacob constantly attempts to take action and claim his masculinity in a desire to feel like a whole man. However, even though he is certain that only the most violent experiences can be defining in life, he only indulges in violence that is directed mostly against himself. When Julia challenges Jacob with the texts on his secret phone, he loses self-control and shouts "You are my enemy!" (98). Although at the time of the quarrel the exclamation seems to be directed against his wife, later the reader finds out that Jacob merely quoted Julia's own statement, which she screamed during her labor and

[20] It is reminiscent of a dilemma, faced by the protagonist of Fyodor Dostoevsky's novel *Crime and Punishment*. Radion Raskolnikov – whose surname is literally translated as "split up," "cracked" – claims his right and capability to kill another person: "Am I a trembling creature, or have I the right?"

subsequently forgot (482). In other words, the enemy that Jacobs confronts is both times the same, himself.

In one flashback, Jacob remembers how right before his bar mitzvah, together with his cousin he broke into The National Zoo at night to jump into a cage with lions.[21]

> There, on the dirt, in the middle of the simulated savannah, in the middle of the nation's capital, he felt something so irrepressible and true that it would either save or ruin his life. . . . Inside the lion's den he felt surrounded and embraced by his own existence. He felt, perhaps for the first time in his life, safe. (390)

Even if it is through an unproductive and worthless activity, Jacob is able to feel alive, like a whole man. These were "the moments when life felt big, precious. But they made up such an utterly small portion of his time on earth: Five minutes a year? What did it sum up to? A day? At most? A day of feeling alive in four decades of life?" (390). That is why, Jacob attempts to invigorate and enliven his life with a virtual adultery, an over-the-phone relationship with his colleague. The messages, which Jacob writes to the woman, display Jacob's fantasies of power, control and masculinity. Foer introduces these vivid and vulgar "sexts" as isolated sentences amid a narration of Julia's ideas on a design of an ideal home:

> She liked textures that the fingers and feet know, even if the eye doesn't. She liked fireplaces centered in kitchens centered on the main living floor. She liked more bookshelves than are necessary. She liked skylights over showers, but nowhere else. She liked intentional imperfections, but she couldn't bear nonchalance, but she also liked to remember that there could be no such thing as an intentional imperfection. People are always mistaking something that looks good for something that feels good.
>
> *you're begging me to fuck your tight pussy, but you don't deserve it yet*
>
> She didn't like uniform textures—they aren't how things are. She didn't like rugs centered in rooms. . . . She didn't like concealed functions—refrigerators behind panels, toiletries behind mirrors, TVs that descend into cabinets.
> *You don't need it enough yet*
> *I want to see you dripping onto your asshole*

[21] This is an allusion to the story of Daniel in the lions' den, included in Chapter 6 of the Book of Daniel. Thrown into a pit with lions for his faith, Daniel is unharmed by the wild animals. This story which brings up the themes of divine deliverance and justice is a recurrent motif in Jewish fiction. It is present, for example, in Saul Bellow's novel *Henderson, the Rain King* (1959) where the protagonist, Mr. Henderson, needed to enter a room with a real living lion in order to find spiritual contentment.

> Every architect has fantasies of building her own home, and so does every woman. (28-29)

Although Julia does not find out about the messages until later, the counterpoising of the two narratives on the same page presents an ironic parallel between the two fantasies, stereotypically male and female ideal worlds of sexuality and domesticity.

Jacob's affair gives him a possibility to escape the norms that seem to overwhelm every aspect of his life. Feona Attwood in "Reading Porn: The Paradigm Shift in Pornography Research" notes that, "as a category of the profane or transgressive, as an 'outlaw discourse' and a debased low genre" (93), sexually explicit writing and images create an imaginary world, which is characterized by the breakdown in social hierarchy and rejection of moral and ethical norms. Laura Kipnis also agrees that "pornography provides a realm of transgression that is, in effect, a counter-aesthetics to dominant norms of bodies, sexualities and desire itself" (121). In other words, Jacob's sexually graphic messages in *Here I Am* serve as a model of the fantastic, the protagonist's means to claim his personal power and break down cultural taboos.

The theme of sexuality in Jewish American fiction has often served as an integral part in the process of characters' asserting their coherent self within a multicultural society. Just as Jacob struggles to achieve masculinity in *Here I Am*, other Jewish male characters try to bridge the gap between their stereotyped effeminate identity and American mainstream culture. In Philip Roth's *Portnoy's Complaint* (1969) the main character confesses that "I don't seem to stick my dick up these girls, as much as I stick it up their backgrounds – as though through fucking I will discover America" (214). Later, Roth, trying to defend his novel that at the time of its publishing was labelled by the *New Yorker* magazine as "one of the dirtiest books ever published" (qtd. in *BookMarks*, 19 March 2018), claimed that he "wanted to raise obscenity to the level of a subject because Portnoy wants to be free" (*Reading Myself and Others* 19).

In *Mr. Sammler's Planet* (1970) Bellow treats the theme similarly when he puts his Jewish "seventy-plus" refugee protagonist in opposition with a version of Rousseau's noble savage. Arthur Sammler, who is a one-eyed New York University professor and a Holocaust survivor, observes a black, masculine, handsome pickpocket on a cross-city bus and is drawn to watch the crime. Bellow specifically stresses the connection

between violence and sexuality, both of which become an indication of potency and power for his typical Jewish intellectual protagonist. One of the key scenes of the novel comes when Sammler delivers a lecture at Columbia University and gets interrupted by a militant heckler, who shouts, "Why do you listen to this effete old shit? What has he got to tell you? His balls are dry. He's dead. He can't come" (34).

In *Here I Am*, the protagonist's sexuality similarly represents his strive for strength, power and vitality. At the same time, because Jacob's sexuality exists only in the make-believe space of virtual communication, it also poses a question of an obvious contradiction between fantasy and reality. After Julia finds out about the messages, she attacks him with the accusations:

> *Lick the cum out of her asshole? ... You?* You're a coward and germ freak. You just wanted to write it. Which is fine. Which is even great. But acknowledge the make-believe. You *want* to want some kind of sexually supercharged life, but you *actually* want the gate-checked stroller, and the Aquaphor, and even your desiccated, blowjobless existence, because it spares you worrying about erections. Jesus, Jacob, you carry a pocket of wipes so you'll never have to use toilet paper. That's not the behaviour of a man who wants to lick cum from anyone's asshole. (96)

Jacob's attempt to trespass his social identity and claim his masculinity through an imagined adultery proves unsuccessful. As in Foer's first two novels, the protagonist's escape into the fantasy world doesn't allow him to achieve a resolution for his existential crisis. At the end of the novel we leave Jacob unhappy and lonely, seeking his ex-wife's help in addressing health problems that he has developed.

Thirteen year old Sam, the eldest son in the Bloch family, allows Foer to further explore the theme of masculinity and violence through the perspective of the youngest generation of Holocaust survivors, those who had virtually no contact with living witnesses of the historical horrors. It is not surprising, then, that Sam is able to relate to violence only through virtual explorations.

> Why was he so obsessed with animal cruelty, anyway? He spent enormous amounts of time seeking violence: animal cruelty, but also animal fights (organized by humans, and in nature), animals attacking people, bullfighters getting what they deserved, skateboarders getting what they deserved, athletes' knees bending the wrong way, bum fights, helicopter beheadings, and more: garbage disposal accidents, car antenna lobotomies, civilian

> victims of chemical warfare, masturbation injuries, Shia heads on Sunni fence posts, botched surgeries, steam-burn victims, instructional videos about cutting away the questionable parts of roadkill (as if there were unquestionable parts), instructional videos about painless suicide (as if that weren't definitionally impossible), and so on, and on and on. The images were sharp objects he used against himself: there was so much in him that he needed to move to the outside, but the process required wounds. (14)

Similar to Oskar Schell in *Extremely Loud*, Sam imagines inflicting pain on himself with the hope that his wounds could be read as a narrative of inherited trauma. Violence, then, serves as a marker of true identity, of the deep psychological crisis which the boy is unable to express even to himself.

On the first pages of the novel, Jacob and Julia are confronted by a rabbi with accusation that Sam used "racial epithets" in Hebrew school: he evidently wrote the words "filthy Arab, chink, cunt, jab, faggot, spic, kike, n-word" (6) on a piece of paper and left it on his desk after class. The enigma of whether or not the boy actually wrote these words follows the plot until almost the very end of the book. While Sam denies having written the note, Julia demands that he confesses his mischief and apologizes the teacher, primarily because she is concerned that, as a result of the incident, they will have to postpone Sam's bar mitzvah. His father Jacob, however, in his usual manner of escaping uncomfortable reality, suggests that they must be "completely misinterpreting this list," or that "all thirteen-year-old boys write the same" (7). The riddle is resolved when Sam finally explains his reason for writing the words. The boy was challenged by his girl-friend to find the "hardest thing to say":

> I thought a lot about what she said. And I was thinking about it in Hebrew school that day when I wrote those words. I was just seeing how each of them felt, seeing how hard it was to write them, and say them to myself. That's why I did it. But that's not the point.
> The point is: I made a mistake. I thought that the *worst* thing to say was the *hardest* thing to say. But it's actually pretty easy to say horrible things: retard, cunt, whatever. In a way, it's even easier because we know exactly how bad the words are. There's nothing scary about them.
> . . . I realized that the hardest thing to say isn't a word, or a sentence, but an event. The hardest thing to say couldn't be something you say to yourself. It requires the hardest person, or people, to say it to. (457)

Here, as Sam analyses the limits of his freedom and his personality, he understands that only when directed against the real target can cruelty inflict harm or be a weapon.

Unlike his father, who merely imagines his authority and power through virtual adultery, Sam takes responsibility for his strength and realizes its potential. Similar to Alex in *Everything is Illuminated* who confronts his father to leave the family, or Oskar in *Extremely Loud* who at the end of the novel finally talks to his mother about his enduring pain, Sam Bloch during his bar mitzvah in front of the whole family says that "forced to choose between my parents, I would be able to" (462). This statement symbolically represents the boy's coming of age, as Sam declares his ability to move away from the idealistic shelter of a two-parent family. More importantly, though, in the case of Jewish collective identity, Sam's announcement indicates the destruction of the paternal genealogy, which in the Blochs' case, is equal to the termination of the process of the trauma's transmission. By acknowledging his authority, the boy is able to move away from the legacy of the past and from the victimhood that he inherited from his father.

Foer further analyses the relation between violence, identity and their incorporation into the process of defining reality and fantasy in the two cousins, Jacob and Tamir. Jacob was born and has lived his entire life in the United States, therefore he can only imagine and secretly envy the experiences of his Israeli relatives, who have to constantly survive the threat of military intervention. Jacob's understanding of violence in the Middle East is similar to his negotiation of the inherited trauma of the Holocaust: while he is aware of it and acknowledges its influence on his life, it is too distant to have any particular influence on his identity.

For Tamir, on the other hand, violence is an integral part of his everyday life, a definition of his self. He is said to live in the world where people construct "a shelter beneath the shelter" (258), thus it is not surprising that Tamir seems to be more virile, vigorous, and grown-up, at least in Jacob's eyes.

> Tamir walked himself to school before Jacob's parents would leave him at a drop-off birthday party. Tamir cooked his own dinner, while an airplane full of dark green vegetables searched for a landing in Jacob's mouth. Tamir drank beer before Jacob, smoked pot before Jacob, got a blowjob before Jacob, got arrested before Jacob (who would never be arrested), travelled abroad before Jacob, had his heart created by having his heart broken before Jacob. When Tamir was given an M16, Jacob was given a Eurail pass. Tamir tried without success to stay out of risky situations; Jacob tried

> without success to find his way into them. At nineteen, Tamir was in a half-buried outpost in south Lebanon, behind four feet of concrete. Jacob was in a dorm in New Haven . . . [Tamir] had fought for his homeland, while Jacob spent entire nights debating whether that stupid New Yorker poster where New York is bigger than everything else would look better on this wall or that one. Tamir tried not to get killed, while Jacob tried not to die of boredom. (223-224)

While Jacob tries to find fault in his cousin's behaviour, he also envies Tamir's personality and is mesmerized by his spiritedness, more so because it has an element of the danger and violence in it: "All Jacob wanted to talk about was living close to death. Had Tamir killed anyone? Did [he] have any stories of fellow soldiers torturing or being tortured? What's the worst thing [he] ever saw with his own eyes?" (244).

The contrast between the American image of the neurotic and feminine Jewish male and the Israeli hyper-masculine citizen-soldier originates from the founding of the State of Israel in 1948. Rosenberg explains in "Jewish Masculinities," that "with their own nation, Jewish men had at last entered the historical mainstream. The founding, along with the victories of the 1967 and 1973 wars, and later the rescue of hostages at Entebbe by Jewish Special Forces, changed the international perception of the Jewish male from non-violent 'schlemiel' to savvy warrior" (350).

The difference between Jacob's and Tamir's way to negotiate violence and traumatic experiences become most distinctive in the context of a massive disaster that shakes the Middle East and resonates in the whole world, including the United States. Just as tensions within the Bloch family seem to be approaching a climax, another catastrophe strikes—Israel is jolted by a major earthquake that leaves the whole region in destruction. The humanitarian crisis in the Middle East, that follows the natural disaster, provokes ideological tensions between the neighboring countries which within fifteen days escalate into world-wide anti-Semitic military conflict. As the war in the Middle East escalates, it develops into a bloodshed particularly high in casualties, so, for example, "of the sixty-two who went to fight in Israel, twenty-four died" (483). Soon, the prime minister of Israel makes a public address "speaking only to Jews" who spread across the globe, with a plea "to come home not only to fight for Israel's survival, but to fight for [their] own" (454). Tamir, who together with his youngest son Barak was separated from their family by the collapse of the communication infrastructure, returns

to Israel to join his oldest son Noam in military action. Jacob also considers enrolling in the army but, at the last moment, decides to stay in the United States and focus on his personal problems with his family.

The direct accounts of armed operations are excluded from Foer's novel, and combat scenes are deliberately described with scarce detailing. Jacob and his family follow the news over the television, and the reader is presented with a day to day polyphony of media reports, reminiscent of mindless switching through TV channels. In the disjointed narrative of conflict, a story of a "twenty-two-year-old Arab Israeli citizen with four missing siblings" (278) alternates with statements from the Saudi king about an agreement of "temporary unification" between Saudi Arabia and Jordan: "Asked why Saudi Arabia's unprecedentedly large supply line of aid also includes ground troops, the Saudi king replies: 'To assist in the recovery.' Asked why it includes two hundred combat aircraft, he replies: 'It doesn't'" (280).

Through multiple examples of demagogy and hypocrisy, portrayed in the context of Israel's destruction, Foer addresses the limitations and inherent problems of mediated witnessing of mass violence. In the chapter "Fifteen Days of Five Hundred Years" that presents the chronicle of the war, the author writes: "little was known, which made what little was known terrifying" (251). This remark serves as a reference to the media representations of the 9/11 attack, which Foer analyzed in his earlier novel, *Extremely Loud.* Tim Allen and Jean Seaton in their study on war journalism, *The Media of Conflict: War Reporting and Representations of Ethnic Violence* (1999), state that "in the West . . . rapid-fire, bullet-point summaries of events, combined with the images that are heart-rending but sanitized, 'real-time' but manipulated, have become the dominant model" (38). Foer demonstrates, how mass media makes no attempt to explain crucial events in more than the shallowest terms, because "the objective is often to elicit sympathy for the apparently innocent and helpless, or sometimes to rail against the manifest horrors of the world, [but] rarely to attempt a deeper understanding" (Allen and Seaton 39).

This fragmentary and collage-like narrative of mass violence explains why Jacob perceives the war as a distant event. The protagonist's relation to the international conflict could be summarized with Rothberg's statement about the role of the media in

building the collective memory: “in contemporary societies, mediascapes of all kinds play a predominant role in the construction of the memory frameworks” (15).

“Israel is dispensable to you” declares Tamir. “You love it, support it, sing about it, pray for it, even envy the Jews who live there. And you will survive without it” (397). Jacob has nothing to contradict the allegation, because, as he realizes, his “children are asleep on organic mattresses” while Tamir’s “son is in the middle of that” (395). The war in the Middle East, as an event of mass destruction and extreme violence, becomes a reality check for Jacob, forcing him to consider his authority to make life-changing decisions and face the consequences for his actions. Jacob realizes his inability to live his own life in the immediate present of his everyday reality: he is unable to confess “This is who I am. I am a married man. I have three great kids, a nice house, a good job. I don’t have everything I want, I’m not as respected as I might wish, I’m not as rich or loved or fucked as I might wish, but this is who I am, and choose to be, and admit to being.” But “neither can [he] admit to needing more, to wanting more.” “Forget about other people,” says Tamir. “You can’t even admit your unhappiness to yourself” (399).

Determined to prove his masculinity and willpower, Jacob makes an attempt to join the Israeli army and fight for his symbolic homeland. For him, this decision is equal to trying to claim his own life, his being: “going to Israel. To live. [T]o be capable of standing up and saying, ‘This is who I am’” (399). But it turns out that even this time, Jacob is merely using and abusing the idea of martyrdom in order to win the respect of his Israeli cousin, his children, his wife, and his father. When at two o’clock in the morning he announces his decision to Julia, he is aware that his true hope was “to hear her say, ‘Don’t go.’ But instead she didn’t believe him” (422):

> “No,” she said, her voice now aggressively clear, “what *you’re* doing sucks. Waking me up in the middle of the night with this idiotic Kabuki enactment of . . . I don’t even *know* what. Resolution? Bravery? Selflessness? You assume I’ll come home? That’s nice. And then what? I’ll single-handedly take care of the kids for however long your paintball adventure lasts? That shouldn’t be any problem: preparing three meals a day for them—make that *nine* meals, as no two will ever eat the same thing—and chauffeuring to cello lessons, and speech therapy, and soccer, and soccer, and Hebrew school, and various health professionals? Yeah. I want to be a hero, too. I think being a hero would be awesome. But first, before we get measured for capes, let’s see if we can maintain what we already have.” (423)

Nevertheless, Jacob together with Tamir get their tickets to Israel, arrive at the airport and register for the flight. They both go through a medical examination and an interview with an Israeli officer, and then are left to wait for the departure. But as Jacob sits on the floor of the airport lounge, he starts remembering some minor incidents, both happy and sad, that together constitute "The Bible," the screenplay of his life: "How to Play Suicide Growth Rings" about his grandfather's suicide and his legacy of the Holocaust, "How to Play the Last Wholly Happy Moment" about a time when he prepared a surprise birthday party for Julia, "How to Play Unbroken Rings" about the time they invited a magician to Max's birthday and his tricks proved the importance of trust and unconditional love between all family members. Jacob then realizes that his departure to the war zone is not a proof of his ability to claim his life, but another escape from the true crisis that he has to face at home. He returns home late that night and goes into the room of his youngest son, Benjy. When the boy wakes up from his sleep because of his father's touch, he asks "Did you win the war?" and Jacob confesses that he didn't go. However, this doesn't sound either as a negative response to the boy's question nor as a statement of Jacob's failure, but as a declaration of his achievement, a realization of the actual victory over himself and his weaknesses.

Nevertheless, Jacob continues to write the play where he records every detail that constitutes his life and identity. Similar to Oskar's journal "Stuff That Happened to Me" in *Extremely Loud*, Jacob's Bible proves the protagonist's awareness of reality and his willingness to acknowledge the flow of time. "My synagogue is made of words," writes Jacob, "All the spaces allow it to shift when the ground moves" (533). He then explains, that for every traumatic memory he possesses a happy impression; sad and cheerful recollections are inseparable and only in their unity can constitute the true picture of one's existence.

> Sam's crushed hand, beside the hand that reached for his "I-know"; Argus lying in his own shit, beside the ever-panting tail-wagger who would pee as soon as Max entered the house; Tamir from after the war, beside Noam from before the war; my grandfather's never-unbending knees, beside my kiss on his great-grandson's nonexistent boo-boo, beside my son falling asleep in the rearview mirror, beside the person who will never stop writing these words, who spent his life breaking his fists against the door of his synagogue, begging to be allowed in. . . (533)

Jacob's earliest memory is of his father handling a dead squirrel which they found in their yard. The boy, unable to touch a dead animal, asks his father to remove it.

> Ants were beginning to envelop the dead squirrel. For how long had it been there? Had it eaten poison? . . . I watched my father cover his hand with the clear plastic bag that the morning's *Post*'s had come in, pick up the squirrel, and then pull his hand out, turning the bag inside out with the squirrel in it. . . . I stood at his side and asked question after question. Was it cold? When do you think it died? How do you think it died? Didn't it bother you? . . . Gross you out? . . . Did you think it was disgusting? . . . It was so gross. . . . I couldn't have done it. (356)

His father then admits that he felt the same about the necessity to touch the dead rodent but facing his obligations was what made him an adult. "When you're a dad, there's no one above you. If you don't do something that has to be done, who is going to do it? . . . The more you won't want to do it, the more of a dad you'll be" (357) says Irv. So, when, after his attempt to join the army, Jacob returns to his family home and soon moves out and gets divorced from Julia, he faces reality and acknowledges his guilt in the earlier adultery.

Only after Jacob accepts responsibility, is he able to attain the strength and authority to make decisions and stand up to the actual world. His psychological initiation is symbolically completed in the episode when he has to put down his old and terminally ill dog Argus. Jacob for a long time has refused to admit the animal's pain and the necessity to euthanize it. More so, when Julia recurrently asked him to share the duties of looking after the pet, he even denied that it was his dog and his decision to bring home the animal. Earlier, at a routine check at the vet's office, Jacob's second son Max seems to be more aware of the distressing quality of life that Argus is living.

> "He still enjoys himself at the park," Jacob said to the vet.
> "Sometime he does," Max said. "But mostly he just lies there. And he has such a hard time with stairs at home."
> "He ran the other day."
> "And then limped for like the next three days." (143)

When Jacob takes the dog to the vet for the final time, he is surprised and disturbed by the fact that Argus followed him to the clinic without the leash. "It would have been horrible to lead him there, but less horrible," notices Jacob. This scene brings up the parallel between the dog's euthanasia and the grandfather's suicide, as "Argus was

walking himself to his own end" (566). Until the injection that the vet gives to the dog, Jacob keeps repeating "we live in the world," "over and over and over: *We live in the world*" (567), "*Life is precious, and I live in the world*" (571). This mantra, that acknowledges Jacob's recognition of existence and his focusing on reality, is what makes up the title of the novel, *Here I Am*. It is also explained in the text, as the phrase is derived from the story about Abraham from *Genesis*, cited by Sam during his bar mitzvah:

> God's test of Abraham is written like this: "Sometime later, God tested Abraham. He said to him, 'Abraham!' 'Here I am,' Abraham replied." . . . Whatever God needs or wants, Abraham is wholly present for Him, without conditions or reservations or need for explanation. . . . I think it is primarily about who we are wholly there for, and how that, more than anything else, defines our identity. (102-103)

Foer implies that finding one's position in life and accepting one's identity requires absolute focusing on reality, being "wholly present" in time and space for the people that are important in one's life. "Only one thing can keep something close over time: holding it there. Grappling with it. Wrestling it to the ground, as Jacob did with the angel, and refusing to let go. What we don't wrestle we let go of" (512). While this idea was addressed in both *Everything is Illuminated* and *Extremely Loud*, Foer's third novel brings it to the foreground. As the author describes intergenerational transmission of memory, he stresses that only through experiencing reality as it is, can people attain maturity and master their identity. For the protagonist of the novel, the process of coming to terms with reality and accepting his identity becomes a journey, a quest, similar to the central quests of *Everything is Illuminated* and *Extremely Loud*. In this light, the name of Jacob's dog, Argus, serves as a parallel to Odysseus' faithful dog Argus, and, therefore, allows the reader to understand the concluding scene as the protagonist's symbolic return to his true home, the claim of his self.

CONCLUSION

In *Everything is Illuminated*, the letters that Alex writes to Jonathan as a feedback to the fictional story of Trachimbrod, serve as an important comment on the author's right to reinvent a story. In one of the letters, the Ukrainian translator notes that Jonathan's narrative contains names that are not "truthful names for Ukraine" (25). The young man continues: "There were many mishaps like this, I will inform you. Are you being humorous writer here, or an uninformed one?" (25). Alex's observation points to an obvious gap in the narrative, its factual inaccuracies, which may be a result of the lack of historical figures, or, as Alex concludes, an attempt to take the information light-heartedly. Later in the novel, Alex and Jonathan have the following conversation:

> "You are very funny, Jonathan." "No. That's the last thing I want to be." "Why? To be funny is a great thing." "No it's not." "Why is this?" "I used to think that humor was the only way to appreciate how wonderful and terrible the world is, to celebrate how big life is. You know what I mean?" "Yes, of course" "But now I think it's the opposite. Humor is a way of shrinking from that wonderful and terrible world." (158)

This dialogue is one of the most paradoxical moments of the novel which, at the same time, makes a prominent statement about Foer's attitude to fictional writing. In fact, reference to humor in the abovementioned quotation should be understood as a remark on a much wider subject. Humor, which is often considered a peculiar trait of Jewish writing, is an intellectual response to the oppression and the persecutions that the Jews faced for centuries. Saul Bellow, for example, when commenting on the use of jokes in Jewish American short fiction, wrote:

> I call the attitudes of these stories characteristically Jewish, in them laughter and trembling are so curiously mingled that it is not easy to determine the relations of the two. At times the laughter seems simply to restore the equilibrium of sanity; at times the figures of the story, or parable, appear to invite or encourage trembling with the secret aim of overcoming it by means of laughter. (*There is Simply Too Much* 116)

Humor, an enduring survival tactic, is a "two-way defense mechanism: while inwardly it diverts one's emotional response into laughter rather than tears, outwardly it might just distract would-be persecutors," writes Keiron Pim in "Is Jewish Humour the Greatest Defense Mechanism Ever Created?" (*The Spectator*, 25 Nov. 2017).

Foer agrees, that laughter makes it easier to cope with tragic experiences and pain. At the same time, however, the author cautions that the use of humor could mean that the distressing reality is not taken seriously enough. Although some of his characters may choose to laugh about things that are otherwise too heartbreaking, they cannot make the past disappear and avoid facing the terrible trauma that marks their lives.

The relation between the truth about traumatizing reality on the one hand, and the escape from these horrors into the realm of the imagination and fantasy, on the other, is the central theme in all three Foer's novels and the subject of this thesis. The three novels draw on the connection between the factual accounts of historical mass violence and the difficulty to express personal experiences related to these traumatic events. Actual historical atrocities, such as the Holocaust, the Dresden and Hiroshima bombings, the 9/11 terrorist attacks, and the war in the Middle East, become a marker for the protagonists' moral and ethical position, a reality check which asks both the characters and the reader to reassess and reaffirm their views and attitudes. As a representative of the Jewish American tradition with its highly developed historical consciousness, Foer addresses these catastrophic events, both past and present, in archetypal terms. Similar to Talmudic writing, which understands the destruction of the Temple as a promise for the birth of the Messiah, the novelist believes in the cathartic component of extreme violent experiences. His characters who go through unmasterable trauma after witnessing harrowing brutality, are either consumed by their memories of the past, or evolve to find a true understanding and appreciation of reality.

The Holocaust, is a recurrent theme and background for the plots in all three of Foer's novels. At the same time, Foer's characters are separated from the Holocaust by a vast spatial, temporal and cultural distance and have to relate to the tragic events through the present-day reality of their lives in twenty-first century America. That is why the author parallels atrocities of World War II with other historical tragedies, some of them more recent and, thus, easier for the characters to understand. This diversification of the experiences of extreme violence aims to create an objective picture of human suffering, where the war in the Middle East is similarly distanced from the American present-day reality as the history of the Holocaust, and victims of the 9/11 terrorist attack have the same right to express their trauma as victims of the Hiroshima bombing.

Foer shows violence not only in its various ramifications, contrasting in time, space and scope, but also through the eyes of different individuals who fall victims to events beyond their control. By granting voice to observers of episodes of extreme historical mass violence, the author makes abstract events realistic and perceptible.

This process also demonstrates the author's personal path in claiming his Jewish historical heritage. Writing against a contemporary landscape of apprehension and anxiety, Foer turns to his family's past in order to find explanations for the enormity of violence and the mechanisms of coping with trauma. As a member of the third generation of Holocaust survivors, the writer's connection to the atrocities of the Holocaust is influenced by the shifting perspective on the historical facts, by the loss of information about the distant event, and, also, by the complications of transmitting traumatic narratives. Therefore, for Foer as the grandson of the survivor, complete self-definition through the inherited trauma becomes problematic. Nevertheless, his writing confirms that postmemory is an unavoidable "absent presence," that is transmitted through missing information as much as through explicit and graphic documentation. Each of his works embodies Cathy Caruth's definition of the trauma narrative, which is "a rethinking of reference [which] is aimed not at eliminating history but at resituating it in our understanding, that is, at precisely permitting history to arise where immediate understanding may not" (*Unclaimed Experience* 11).

In order to individualize the otherwise impersonal narratives of mass violence, and show the life of a single human amid tragic events, Foer draws vastly on biographical material and records his personal experiences of significant events, crucial in their scope and effect on all of humanity. In terms of writing techniques, this interest in an individual's perspective on violence results in the creation of multifaceted texts, which provide graphic depictions of history through multiple narrative voices. In a decidedly postmodernist way, Foer allows several narrators to give their subjective accounts of the same events and illustrate different methods of dealing with personal and inherited traumas. The author depicts not only several generations from the same family, but also offers a voice to different ethnic and social groups. The reality is thus shown both diachronically and synchronically, in its most plural form.

The main characters in Foer's novels are several generations of a middle-class intellectual family: a grandfather, a father, a grandson, and, in *Here I Am*, also three great-grandsons. The grandfathers are survivors of World War II atrocities and witnesses of events they don't want to speak about. Immigrants to the United States, they adapt to the American reality and, in an attempt to shield their children from the trauma of the past, try to repress their memories. While their families seem to accept the new reality, the trauma of the Holocaust remains in their consciousness as a void that requests to be filled with memories.

The urge to re-establish the connection with their familial past becomes unbearable in the time of a personal or social crisis, such as the death of a close relative, experiencing the act of mass terror or the outset of a military conflict. The youngest generation of Foer's fictional characters, the grandchildren of survivors, set out on a journey to find out details about their families' stories, which, at the same time, becomes their rite de passage and the chance to affirm their ethnic identity.

Nevertheless, because of the symbolical and literal inapproachability of the past and the unspeakability of the trauma, these young men are unable to access history and experience the actual events. In order to proceed in their quest, the characters have to re-create the events of the past and imaginatively fill in the missing information. The realm of history, then, turns into a mystic chronotope, which is filled by the myths and fantasies of the Old World as much as by the true testimonies and factual accounts. Yet, at the end of their journeys the protagonists realize, that the fantasy, which is an integral part of human consciousness, cannot become a substitute for the reality, however distressing it has been. Therefore, these journeys, that symbolize the characters' maturation, also reflect their call to face the truth and acquire a deeper understanding of life and themselves.

The three generations, thus, become an allegory of the phases of emotional response to trauma, which, as different scholars agree, often starts with negation and should be transformed into acceptance, reconnection and integration. The grandfathers in Foer's novels, who represent the collective trauma of the Holocaust and persistence of memory, are unable to leave the past behind and, tragically, fall into the chasm of bitter

memory. At the end of the novels, having accepted the weight of the historical pain, they literally or figuratively commit suicide.

The youngest generation of survivors is Foer's symbol for hope, his representation of renewal within both a particular and universal framework. They are already assimilated in the middle-class American society so, by establishing their historical legacy and cultural identity, should become self-sufficient individuals, who acknowledge their past but, at the same time, face their reality and move forward. The novels' conclusions, however, are ambiguous and leave their protagonists before they make their final claim. Foer, as a decidedly postmodern writer, allows his characters freedom to complete their identity quests and leaves the right to complete the story to the reader.

Because the three novels are based on personal traumas that cannot be easily accessed, accepted, discussed or shared, trauma theory provides the theoretical background on which Foer's fiction is set. Due to the unspeakability of human violent experiences, any attempt to represent trauma must be challenged by its inaccessibility, which, in these three novels, is transmitted in the form of a disjointed narrative and a failure to verbally describe the tragic events. Disruptions and repetitions, the use of visual writing and silence in the text reflect the functioning of a traumatized mind and illustrates that memory is often non-linear and fragmented.

At the same time, creating a narrative of tragic experiences is crucial for a successful emotional and psychological recovery of an individual. "The conflict between the will to deny horrible events and the will to proclaim them aloud is the central dialectic of psychological trauma" (1) explains Judith Herman. However, as words are unable to represent the tragic past, Foer's characters seek other forms of communication to describe the violence they were exposed to, and the pain they experienced in the wake of their trauma. Foer appears to be playing with the idea that despite limitations of accessing the past, it is possible to at least "illuminate" some of its parts. The novelist attempts to work through the limitations of language and allow for a multiplicity of mediums to account for violent experiences: in his novels, spoken testimonies, written chronicles, artifacts, and photography collide in order to represent violent events and their impact.

However, even though testimonial statements may seem explicit and appear to metaphorically bring the past closer, they become a piece of a puzzle that requires persistence and ingenuity in order to be decoded. At the end of their quests, Foer's protagonists realize that the clues they have been trying to follow in their search for the past, are false leads and do not bring them much closer to the truth than they were at the beginning of their journey.

As occurrences of the past are doomed inaccessible for the characters, separated from their reality not only by the temporal and spatial distance, but also by the limitation of the narrative, the actual historical facts reappear in the novels as dreams, illusions or myths. The tragedies are then retold in the form of magical realist texts, where the original traumatic occurrences emerge as allusions, or traces, of the true experiences. Here the distinction between the real and imaginary is illusory, and the truth is separated from the reader by multiple layers of discourse: the facts are told and re-told as highly questionable accounts by unreliable narrators. As such, neither the characters nor the readers are given a direct, unmediated impression of the disasters. The reader, thus, is asked to equally accept and doubt both the falsity and testimony of the representations of violence.

Slipping into the fantastic territory of magical realism not only allows Foer to confront and engage with the past, but also metaphorically echoes the position which the transmission of history occupies in the Jewish collective consciousness. The writer exemplifies the process of perceiving, recording and transmitting the events that took place before one's time, and echoes the Jewish tendency to mythologize history.

The novels do not come to tidy conclusions, because there are no conclusions to be drawn in one's experience of violence. Such horrific events as the Holocaust, the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima, the destruction of Dresden, the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, the ongoing war between Israel and Palestine, have a continuous effect on their victims and witnesses. While Foer allows his characters to overcome the debilitating effect of past traumas, he does not suggest that disturbing memories could or should be erased. The writer insists that only by acknowledging the cruelty of the world, by facing the violence inherent in the past, the present and the future, is it possible to experience reality in its complete richness. This becomes the ultimate goal

for the characters of Foer's novels – their symbolic quest for the past brings them to recognize the value of their present, and allows them to proceed forward into the future.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX 1: ORIGINALITY REPORT

HACETTEPE ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ
YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZ ÇALIŞMASI ORİJİNALLİK RAPORU

HACETTEPE ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ
AMERİKAN KÜLTÜRÜ VE EDEBİYATI ANABİLİM DALI BAŞKANLIĞI'NA

Tarih: 02/07/2018

Tez Başlığı : "Geçmişe Yolculuk: Jonathan Safran Foer'in Romanlarda Şiddet ve Travma Anlatıları." ("Forward to the Past: Narratives of Violence and Trauma in Jonathan Safran Foer's Novels.")

Yukarıda başlığı gösterilen tez çalışmamın a) Kapak sayfası, b) Giriş, c) Ana bölümler ve d) Sonuç kısımlarından oluşan toplam 134 sayfalık kısmına ilişkin, 02/07/2018 tarihinde şahsım/tez danışmanım tarafından Turnitin adlı intihal tespit programından aşağıda işaretlenmiş filtrelemeler uygulanarak alınmış olan orijinallik raporuna göre, tezimin benzerlik oranı % 8 'dır.

Uygulanan filtrelemeler:
1- Kabul/Onay ve Bildirim sayfaları hariç
2- Kaynakça hariç
3- Alıntılar hariç
4- 5 kelimeden daha az örtüşme içeren metin kısımları hariç

Hacettepe Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Tez Çalışması Orijinallik Raporu Alınması ve Kullanılması Uygulama Esasları'nı inceledim ve bu Uygulama Esasları'nda belirtilen azami benzerlik oranlarına göre tez çalışmamın herhangi bir intihal içermediğini; aksinin tespit edileceği muhtemel durumda doğabilecek her türlü hukuki sorumluluğu kabul ettiğimi ve yukarıda vermiş olduğum bilgilerin doğru olduğunu beyan ederim.

Gereğini saygılarımla arz ederim.

02/07/2018

Adı Soyadı: Mariya Doğan
Öğrenci No: N13228716
Anabilim Dalı: Amerikan Kültürü ve Edebiyatı
Programı: Yüksek Lisans

DANIŞMAN ONAYI

UYGUNDUR.

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Ceylan ÖZCAN

(Unvan, Ad Soyad, İmza)

HACETTEPE UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
MASTER'S THESIS ORIGINALITY REPORT

HACETTEPE UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
AMERICAN CULTURE AND LITERATURE DEPARTMENT

Date: 02/07/2018

Thesis Title : "Forward to the Past: Narratives of Violence and Trauma in Jonathan Safran Foer's Novels."

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02/07/2018

Name Surname: Mariya Doğan
Student No: N13228716
Department: American Culture and Literature
Program: M.A.

ADVISOR APPROVAL

APPROVED.

Dr. Ceylan ÖZCAN

(Title, Name Surname, Signature)

APPENDIX 2: ETHICS WAIVER FORM

HACETTEPE ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ
TEZ ÇALIŞMASI ETİK KOMİSYON MUAFİYETİ FORMU

HACETTEPE ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ
AMERİKAN KÜLTÜRÜ VE EDEBİYATI ANABİLİM DALI BAŞKANLIĞI'NA

Tarih: 02/07/2018

Tez Başlığı: "Geçmişe Yolculuk: Jonathan Safran Foer'in Romanlarda Şiddet ve Travma Anlatıları." ("Forward to the Past: Narratives of Violence and Trauma in Jonathan Safran Foer's Novels.")

Yukarıda başlığı gösterilen tez çalışmam:

1. İnsan ve hayvan üzerinde deney niteliği taşımamaktadır,
2. Biyolojik materyal (kan, idrar vb. biyolojik sıvılar ve numuneler) kullanılmasını gerektirmemektedir.
3. Beden bütünlüğüne müdahale içermemektedir.
4. Gözlemsel ve betimsel araştırma (anket, mülakat, ölçek/skala çalışmaları, dosya taramaları, veri kaynakları taraması, sistem-model geliştirme çalışmaları) niteliğinde değildir.

Hacettepe Üniversitesi Etik Kurullar ve Komisyonlarının Yönergelerini inceledim ve bunlara göre tez çalışmamın yürütülebilmesi için herhangi bir Etik Kurul/Komisyon'dan izin alınmasına gerek olmadığını; aksi durumda doğabilecek her türlü hukuki sorumluluğu kabul ettiğimi ve yukarıda vermiş olduğum bilgilerin doğru olduğunu beyan ederim.

Gereğini saygılarımla arz ederim.

02/07/2018

Adı Soyadı: Mariya Doğan
Öğrenci No: N13228716
Anabilim Dalı: Amerikan Kültürü ve Edebiyatı
Programı: Yüksek Lisans
Statüsü: ☒ Yüksek Lisans ☐ Doktora ☐ Bütünleşik Doktora

DANIŞMAN GÖRÜŞÜ VE ONAYI

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Ceylan ÖZCAN

(Unvan, Ad Soyad, İmza)

Detaylı Bilgi: http://www.sosyalbilimler.hacettepe.edu.tr
Telefon: 0-312-2976860 **Faks:** 0-3122992147 **E-posta:** sosyalbilimler@hacettepe.edu.tr

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Date: 02/07/2018

Thesis Title: "Forward to the Past: Narratives of Violence and Trauma in Jonathan Safran Foer's Novels."

My thesis work related to the title above:

1. Does not perform experimentation on animals or people.
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I respectfully submit this for approval.

02/07/2018

Name Surname: Mariya Doğan
Student No: N13228716
Department: American Culture and Literature
Program: M.A.
Status: ☒ MA ☐ Ph.D. ☐ Combined MA/ Ph.D.

ADVISER COMMENTS AND APPROVAL

Dr. Ceylan ÖZCAN

(Title, Name Surname, Signature)